

**Arizona Department of Veterans' Service Advisory Commission**  
4141 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street (North S. Herrera Way), Phoenix, AZ 85012

**February 14, 2013**

**MINUTES**

**Advisory Commissioners**

George Cushing, Chair  
Jeffrey Olson, Vice Chair  
Jefferson Begay  
Philip Hanson  
Wayne Krula  
Ronald Perkins  
Lionel Sanchez  
David Toliver, Sr.

**AZ Department of Veterans' Services (ADVS)**

Homer Rodgers, Assistant Deputy Director  
Dave Hampton, Public Information Officer  
Katherine Harding, Exec. Asst. to the Director  
Judy Smith, Admin. Secretary

**Guests**

Gene Crego, AZ State Council President, Vietnam  
Veterans of America

**Absent**

Brett Rustand (Excused)

**Call to Order** – The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chairman George Cushing. Chairman Cushing asked if there were any corrections to the January minutes. Commissioner Toliver questioned if there was a typographical error in the amount shown as dispersed by the Military Family Relief Fund for 2012. The amount noted was \$600.00 and should have read \$600,000. A correction to the minutes will be made immediately. Commissioner Perkins motioned to approve the minutes. Commissioner Hanson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

**Communications** – Chairman Cushing read a thank you note he received from Gabe Forsberg thanking the Commission for their parting gift of a clock with an engraved inscription noting the Commission's gratitude for her nearly 16 years of service to Veterans and the Commission.

Chairman Cushing attended the United Veterans Council (UVC) meeting in Sierra Vista, Saturday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>. He presented former Advisory Commission Chairwoman, Terri Gent, a certificate of appreciation and plaque, along with her picture, from Arizona Department of Veterans' Services (ADVS) and a letter from the Governor. Terri was very gracious and appreciative of the presentations. Chairman Cushing read a thank you he had received from Terri. Colonel Strickland was not available to make the presentations and had asked Chairman Cushing to make these presentations to Terri on his behalf.

Terri serves on the Sierra Vista United Veterans Council which is very active in the large Veteran community in Sierra Vista.

Chairman Cushing noted that he responded to Mr. Nottingham's letter that was introduced at the January meeting regarding disabled Veteran license plates. He explained in his letter that this is not a matter the Commission would be involved in and that it will not take a stand in the matter.

Chairman Cushing was surprised to read in Dave Hampton's Legislative Update that the representative from Mr. Nottingham's area has brought forth a bill for a special disabled Veteran plate. Dave Hampton, ADVS Public Information Officer, said the bill is currently in the House and the Senate. It is not expected to pass in either chamber.

Commissioner Hanson questioned why Dave didn't think the bill would pass. Dave replied that the legislature is tired of receiving license plate bills. There are 4 or 5 new special plate bills being considered this year.

Commissioner Hanson noted that he had been to the Motor Vehicles Division website and found there were about 36 specialty plates. Dave said the number is probably in the 40-45 range and that a Pat Tillman specialty plate bill passed in the House this week and is currently in the Senate and it may pass there.

**Agency Announcements and Updates** – Homer Rodgers, Assistant Deputy Director, sends Colonel Strickland's regrets that he and Robert Barnes, Deputy Director, could not be at the meeting today. They are attending the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA) Convention in Washington, DC this week. Mr. Rodgers turned the meeting over to Dave Hampton for a legislative report.

Dave Hampton presented a NASDVA News Release indicating that Governor Jan Brewer is being named Veterans "Advocate of the Year" for the State of Arizona. This is the first time the organization has named a governor to this award. The governor will receive an "iron mike" award of the American Soldier statue located at Fort Bragg, NC. The governor's office is expected to release a statement about this award.

Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman also received this award. The governors were honored for their work on behalf of military service members and Veterans and their families within their states. Each will receive an "iron mike" award. NASDVA made this announcement at the conference of VA directors held this week in Alexandria, VA.

Dave noted that it has been a busy week at the legislature. Today a bill will pass from the Senate; a resolution that will make Arizona a commemorative partner with the Department of Defense for the 50<sup>th</sup> Vietnam Commemoration Event that ADVS has hosted dinners for in the past 2 years. The resolution will authorize Arizona to become an official partner. Arizona is the second state to become a commemorative partner of this organization; Alabama was the first.

Last year, unknown to ADVS, a bill was passed authorizing a nursing home assessment, which is basically a bed tax, and each state licensed nursing home is required to pay a certain amount of money to the Department of Revenue. This leverage is being done to get more federal money and the plan is to divide the money for use in all nursing homes.

The Arizona State Veteran Home already receives federal money so it cannot leverage for more federal money. The assessment would cost \$500,000 a year. The first payment is due February 15<sup>th</sup>.

Dave drafted a bill and Senator Gail Griffin of Sierra Vista introduced it to the legislature in an attempt to exempt the Phoenix State Veteran Home from this assessment and to save one-half million dollars per year. Because ADVS was not aware of this assessment until now, the governor's office will ask the Department of Revenue not to bill ADVS.

The bill has been assigned but not heard yet. It should be heard next Wednesday in the Senate. ADVS has had good discussions with the Nursing Home Association regarding this bill. We want to make the State Veteran Homes exempt and we've come to an amicable agreement with the Nursing Home Association.

The way the law was written it took effect October 1, 2012, and nursing homes are assessed based on 2011 figures. The Tucson home wasn't getting any figures at that time so it is not included in the calculations this year, but the Nursing Home Association wants to make this assessment permanent, so it is best to exempt the Veteran homes. Every other state is exempting their Veteran Homes and that's what ADVS is working to do. An emergency clause was added to the bill so that it takes effect on the signature of the governor and there is a retroactive clause that makes exemption effective November 30, 2012.

Dave said every state we've contacted has exempted their Veteran Homes. Legal advice from the Attorney General's office is that exemption from the assessment is best for the state.

Jeff Begay inquired whether the assessment included Veteran Homes that would be built on Native American lands or sovereign nations. Commissioner Begay's concern is future funding and whether the bill helps or hinders.

Dave is not sure what the legality is on Native American or sovereign lands, however since a Veteran Home hasn't been built, if the Nursing Home Association moves to make this assessment permanent, we would need to address the matter. Mr. Begay makes a make a very good point and, at present, if it's a licensed facility in the state of Arizona, it is expected to be a part of that assessment.

Commissioner Krula inquired about Bill 2391-Tax Exemptions, Veterans' Pensions, as noted in the legislative report and asked what the prospects are for the bill passing. Commissioner Perkins said the bill is probably not going anywhere because it covers all retirement pensions.

Bill 2391 is assigned to three committees. Next week is the last week to hear Senate and House Bills. Some of the bills listed in the legislative report will go away after next week.

Dave noted that Senate Bill 1287 – Military Retiree, Pension Exclusion Amount - raises the \$2,500 exemption to \$5,000, beginning January 1, 2013, and that it has a better chance of passing.

Bill 1287 went out of the Senate Finance Committee yesterday on a 70-0 vote. There is a good chance it will get through. It will eventually happen once the fiscal situation gets better; however the legislature is going to hold money bills as they have in recent years. One thousand two hundred twelve bills were introduced this year; many aren't being assigned to committees. Dave said a good way to determine if a bill has a good chance of passing is that the more committees it's assigned to, the less chance it has to get through.

Dave drew the commissioners' attention to Bill 2076 – Separating Service Members Licensure. The bill passed out of the House Public Safety Military & Regulatory Affairs Commission yesterday. The bill would give Veterans credit for military training and experience in meeting the requirements of state licensing for jobs such as an EMT. A combat medic would not have to take courses to get an EMT license. The same applies for Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) positions and commercial driver's licenses, which are included in the bill. The bill looks favorable for passing.

Dave noted that a resolution was passed unanimously dealing with tribal Veteran Homes. The bill as introduced was House Concurrent Memorial 2004 from Representative Albert Hale, asking congress to change the current rules of law. Presently, when the state builds a Veteran home, it pays 1/3 of the cost and the federal government pays 2/3 of the cost. At the close of the project, the state receives 1/3 reimbursement, plus a daily per diem.

Current regulations and statutes apply to states, territories and Puerto Rico, but not tribal lands. This is a matter Congress needs to address and rectify, especially since the Navajo Nation is planning to build the first tribal Veteran Nursing Home in the country. This is a first for the nation; Arizona is breaking new ground in building the Navajo Nation Veteran Home.

Homer Rodgers said Deputy Assistant Secretary John Garcia, who heads up the Veteran Administration's (VA's) Department of Inter-governmental Affairs, will have a meeting with the President of the Navajo Nation on March 6<sup>th</sup>, along with Director Strickland and the Navajo Department of Veterans Affairs, to review this issue and they will visit the site of the proposed Veteran Home.

Dave asked if there were any further questions regarding the legislative report. Commissioner Perkins and several Commissioners said they enjoy the weekly legislative reports and find them very helpful.

Mr. Rodgers reported that the department is doing well. The Flagstaff project is progressing well and plans are to be completed by mid-June so we can put the project out for bid for a contractor.

An address was established for the Flagstaff cemetery project. The National Guard had always called the road leading to the area "the access road". Camp Navajo Commanders and the Land Assets Office in Phoenix conferred and came up with the name "Veterans' Drive". This indicates the good cooperation ADVS has established with the Garrison and National Guard on this project.

The site is in a mountainous region and there are issues with rock. Engineers say the soil is fractured and easy to remove, however, because rock is close to the surface, there is a process they have to complete to remove rocks and boulders. Washington DC is involved in solving this issue.

This week, we received notification from the Federal VA in Washington for approval of funding of \$1.5 million for renovations for the Phoenix Veteran Home. Renovations include electronic medical records, a new front foyer which has been a problem with extreme heat in summer and cold in winter. We want to make a double foyer entry. Our plan is to also install an updated security system in the Alzheimer's unit.

We requested 65% reimbursement from the Veterans Administration (VA) for the new chillers that were replaced 2 years ago at a cost of more than \$100,000. The reimbursement was received and we can use these funds to go forward with renovations.

Mr. Rodgers reported that the Navajo Nation received a letter from the Navajo Housing Authority to proceed with their Veteran Home project. The Navajo Nation is aware of legislative changes that need to be made to the law. Senator Jackson and Representative Hale have been personally notified.

Commissioner Sanchez inquired what the total amount of beds in operation in the Tucson Veteran Home is today. Mr. Rodgers reported that all 120 beds are operational and we coordinate staffing with the intake of patients. ADVS must follow State and Federal guidelines for hiring professionals. Three wings of the Tucson Veteran Home are in operation at present.

Ms. Britton O'Brien, Director of the Governor's Southern Arizona Office, is involved with the proposed cemetery for Marana. She contacted Pima County and received a letter from the county administrator's office indicating that they rearranged their plan to put in the 1.1 mile road leading to the project, which is needed. Mr. Ki, the owner, said if he got a commitment to build the road to the project, he would donate the land. Mr. Rodgers met with Greg Wexler the manager of Mr. Ki's property and told him ADVS wants to move forward with the project.

Mr. Rodgers noted that levee repair along the Marana site needs to be done through the Pima County Administrator's office. They will repair the levee at a cost of \$1.2 million dollars. The land needs to be transferred to ADVS in order to complete environmental assessment studies. Written commitment from Pima County is needed for the Ki family to donate the land. ADVS is waiting to get the property deed in hand before proceeding with this project.

Chairman Cushing noted that obtaining land for a cemetery in the Tucson area has been an issue for several years; and when ADVS can announce ownership of the land and go forward with the cemetery project, it will make many people in the Tucson area happy.

Chairman Cushing remarked that these project details are what the commission likes to know so that when they meet people or get phone calls or emails about what has been read in the minutes, they can respond with knowledgeable answers.

The Commission is appreciative of the detailed meeting minutes and that people are following what the Commission does. It is important that these details are noted in the minutes and posted on the website for the people in the community who are accessing the ADVS website. Chairman Cushing noted the Commissioners are getting feedback at community functions they attend. ADVS is very good about informing the commission of upcoming events.

Director Strickland, Mike Klier, Assistant Deputy Director, and Mr. Rodgers met with the Tribal Council for the San Carlos Apache Nation last Friday. The Council stated that they will move forward with a Tribal Veteran Cemetery on the San Carlos Apache Nation.

Commissioner Sanchez inquired whether the San Carlos Apache Nation would be building the cemetery themselves. Mr. Rodgers replied that, as with the Navajo Nation, under their culture and traditions, San Carlos would have control of building the project and ADVS would act as advisors.

Mr. Rodgers noted that the Sierra Vista Cemetery expansion is about 65% complete. Chairman Cushing was at the cemetery earlier this month and said the improvements have made it an attractive cemetery and that it is great for that area where there is a large community of Veterans.

Chairman Cushing has been working with Mike Klier to receive notification of events in the regions commissioners serve. Dave noted that he provides legislative updates to the various regions. If there is something going on in their respective regions, the commissioners would like to know so they can make plans to attend events. Commissioners should let the VBC's know if they are attending an event in their area.

Chairman Cushing asked Dave some time ago if it would be possible to send the Veteran Benefit Counselor (VBC) offices a photo and bio of the commissioners assigned to represent their regions and issue notification to the local media so that folks around the state know there are commissioners assigned to their region who can be contacted. The commission would like for people to know they are out there working on Veteran issues around the state.

Mr. Krula asked if region assignments are being changed. Chairman Cushing said the geographical regional assignments will remain the same.

Many people don't know the Governor has a commission who is interested in Veteran issues. The Commission used to hold Town Hall meetings and it got to be expensive for ADVS staff and Commissioners to stay overnight. One or two people from the audience would take center stage and talk a great length of time about their issues and others didn't get a chance to voice their concerns.

Former Commissioner Larry McKim was keeping track of questions that were asked at Town Hall meetings. Chairman Cushing followed up on these questions after Larry left the Commission and realized that the same questions were being asked in each region.

In lieu of Town Hall Meetings, it seems to be working better for Commissioners to attend functions around the state where Veterans can approach and ask questions. A one-on-one interaction with Commissioners is better and people are more willing to come forward with issues.

Commissioner Krula inquired about the American Legion or VFW conventions and whether there is anything the commissioners need to attend.

Katherine reported that the ADVS is co-hosting with the Heard Museum to honor Arizona Native American Vietnam Warriors. The ceremony will be held at the Heard Museum on May 25th. Katherine will forward information to the Commissioners.

Mr. Rodgers will administer last rites at the "Missing in America" ceremony on Feb. 27<sup>th</sup> at the National Memorial Cemetery in Cave Creek.

Mr. Rodgers has attended many other burial ceremonies for families whose Veterans did not receive a burial. It is a personal matter to him and very humbling. The Coast Guard, Marines and Air Force participate in unfolding and folding of the flag. It is an impressive ceremony where each individual who is being interred is recognized and there is a flag folding ceremony for each one. Fifteen or more Veterans are being interred with dignity on February 27<sup>th</sup>. There will be a ceremony of this nature at the Sierra Vista Cemetery in March.

Chairman Cushing said this is long overdue for Veterans who have not had a proper burial. It is surprising that families have not gotten involved and brought this issue to the forefront to get something done about it.

**Introduction and Welcome to Invited guests** – Chairman Cushing recognized guest Gene Crego, AZ State Council President, Vietnam Veterans of America. Mr. Crego noted the following upcoming events and information, inviting ADVS and the Commissioners to attend.

1. **February 23** - Stand Down, Bullhead City/Kingman. This marks the first stand down ever in Mohave County.
2. **March 29** – 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Vietnam Veterans Memorial Day – Bullhead City, Kingman and Lake Havasu will honor Vietnam Veterans. In 2008, the Bullhead City Council proclaimed March 29<sup>th</sup> as Vietnam Veterans Memorial Day to commemorate the withdrawal of the last U.S. troops from South Vietnam on March 29, 1973. Bullhead City's commemoration will be at 6 p.m. at the Mohave Community College.

Mr. Crego said he would like Colonel Strickland to speak at one or both of these events if his schedule permits.

3. **April 17** – Mr. Crego and 32 local Vietnam Veterans of America intend to storm Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. Gene requested that feedback be turned in to him by March 15<sup>th</sup> for creating an agenda to send to Washington D.C. to alert them of Vietnam Veterans of America's intent to storm the Hill.
4. **June 5-9** - VFW Convention at Fort McDowell Casino/Resort. The VFW is accepting ads for this event and if the Commission is interested in posting an ad, it is due by May 15.
5. **50th anniversary for Vietnam Veterans of America.** The Department of Defense is coordinating with other federal agencies, Veteran groups, state, and local governments and non-government organizations for their input in Vietnam Veteran War commemoration activities. Programs similar to the Phoenix programs are being conducted by the U.S. Army and Marine Corps. in Yuma.
6. Tucson has been selected to host the **Vietnam Veterans of America National Leadership Conference** in 2016. No other details of this event were provided.

Vietnam Veterans of America has 2 new Veteran Service Officers (VSO's); Chuck Byers with 25 years of experience for the Mesa/Phoenix area and Bill Kohlberg in Sierra Vista.

7. **Unified Arizona Veterans (UAV)** Chairman Bob Madden is overseeing several committees for the UAV. He has 10 individuals per committee; some are Veterans. His committees are Legislative, Communication and the award selection process for the AZ Veteran Hall of Fame.

**Outreach Activities for the Commission** – Commissioner Perkins is reaching out to VBC's and has been working with Ron Shackle at the Chandler Veterans Service Division (VSD) office. Ron invited Commissioner Perkins to attend a meeting hosted by the Human Relations Advisory Board in Mesa. This was the first meeting to set up a Veterans Task Force. Mesa's mayor attended; he wanted to see what needs have not been met for Veterans, what kinds of resources the city has to aid in this process and how to help the community fill the gaps. Follow up meetings are planned. The task force wants to hold a job fair with employers in Mesa and encourage them to hire Veterans.

The City of Mesa was brought up at a recent UAV meeting; many cities are looking at creating a Veterans court, including Mesa.

Commissioner Perkins saw Attorney Gregg Maxon at the meeting who said the Veterans Court is going very well and he will act as judge soon at the Veteran Court. He said they are also working with the federal court downtown to set up a Veterans Court within the federal system.

Ron Shackle, Veterans' Benefit Counselor of the Chandler office will participate in a job fair at the state fair grounds on Wednesday, March 20<sup>th</sup>. Commissioner Perkins and Ron will have a Veterans information table set up along with the commissioners' table top display, at this event. Commissioners Hanson and Perkins plan to attend this event.

Chairman Cushing remarked that this is a good example of commissioners working with the Veteran Benefit Counselors in their respective regions to get as much exposure as possible. Each region has unique opportunities for commissioners to get involved in representing the Director and Governor. Commissioners are encouraged to make contact with the VBC's in their regions on a semi-regular basis.

Commissioner Sanchez contacted the Navajo Nation and learned that Tom Gorman and staff will be in Tucson Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup> and in Sacaton the next day. Many different tribes are convening from around the state and some from out of state. Saturday morning after a parade there will be a luncheon at the church. He encouraged commissioners to stop by and introduce themselves.

Commissioner Begay said there will be an Iwo Jima Landing and after the parade and lunch, there is a Pow Wow. Part of the Pow Wow is the Gourd Dance which is the Veteran Warrior Honor Dance. Jeff plans to be there and will ask the head gourd dancer if he can introduce members of the Advisory Commission.

Commissioner Begay was in Chinle on December 23, 2012, and met with ADVS Veterans Counselor Tanya Dooline. Vietnam Veteran Jackie Berbank is working with Tanya to set a meeting for Veterans in Flagstaff. If a meeting is set, Tanya and Jackie would coordinate bringing a busload of Veterans to this meeting.

Commissioner Begay reported there are other tribes in the Northern region that would be interested in the introduction between the state Veteran office and tribal offices. Presently, the Tribal Government, State Government and the Federal Health Services medically treat Veterans. In the past, because of a treaty obligation of Native Americans, there has been difficulty with Veterans going to Indian Health Services for medical treatment. The Veteran was told they couldn't receive services and were sent to the Veterans Administration (VA) in Albuquerque, Prescott or Phoenix. The Native American tribes worked out an agreement whereby they receive medical services and can be reimbursed their costs. The Native American Veterans on Indian lands are in a state of confusion that needs to be clarified.

Chairman Cushing said while in Tucson at the fall conference he was approached about the same issue by people from Salt River. He explained that there is a memorandum of understanding between Veterans Affairs and Indian Health Services whereby Veterans can go to Indian Health Services for treatment and be reimbursed. Many people on the reservation are not aware of this.

Chairman Cushing suggested that the commission meet with Veterans in Flagstaff and hold briefings on Veteran issues and possibly the ADVS could give a briefing.

Commissioner Begay concurs with Chairman Cushing that members of the Advisory Commission, ADVS, Indian Health Services, a Hopi Nation Veteran Representative and members of the Navajo Nation Veteran Offices should meet to discuss these issues.

Homer Rodgers suggested that the Commission contact the mayor in Flagstaff. His office is Veteran-friendly. The new mayor and council members have visited Colonel Strickland's office and Mr. Rodgers recently attended a council meeting in Flagstaff to advise them of the ADVS cemetery project in the area.

Chairman Cushing is very interested in pursuing this matter as there may be Veterans in the northern area who feel nobody is concerned about them. These are matters that the commission needs to address.

Commissioner Krula asked what date the Pow Wow in Sacaton was being held. Commissioner Begay stated it is Friday and Saturday, February 22-23<sup>rd</sup>. Katherine will send the Commission a memo with dates and location.

Commissioner Krula advised that he is working with a Korean War Veteran program called the "Loyal Brothers Program". Lew Bradley, a member of the Unified Arizona Veterans (UAV), advised Mr. Krula that the Chandler City Council is looking for projects and he will be attending a meeting with the city council regarding the "Loyal Brothers Program".

Commissioner Krula has applied for a grant for the "Loyal Brothers Program". Korean War Veterans are poised to be in this program. Commissioner Krula is working with Mike Klier and ADVS Veteran Benefit Counselors for their input to get the program started. He is encouraged by the support for the project that has been received.

Commissioner Perkins announced that the Grand Canyon Council of Boy Scouts is considering the establishment of a Veterans Council Committee.

Commissioner Olson said he is looking into taking the Commission to the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Spring Street Fair in Tucson. The event covers 3 days, March 22-24, and has the potential for 150,000 people to visit. Ten to twelve percent of these visitors would be Veterans. This is an opportunity for the Commissioners to see Veterans and broaden their base to reach more people and let them know about the Commission and what it does. The challenge is workable through a partnership of the Commission and Tucson VBC's.

The Street Fair in Tucson is a huge event with governmental agencies and councils, so there will be a lot of traffic. Commissioner Olson is looking into the costs of setting up a booth at the event. Chairman Cushing asked Mr. Olson to keep him informed of details of the event and if he can fit it into his schedule, he will be present at the Commissioners' booth for a few hours. Commissioner Olson noted that if Commissioners can't attend the spring fair, there will be another one in the fall. Chairman Cushing said this is a good way to get the Commission recognized. These are the types of events the Commission needs to watch for.

The table top display would need to be brought down to Tucson before this event. ADVS will see that this is done.

Commissioner Olson noted that we need to develop a method of securing the table top display in outdoor windy conditions. He inquired if there was a way to weight the display. ADVS will contact the vendor to see if weights are available to purchase for the table top display.

Commissioner Begay shared with the Commission that the Florida Seminole Indian Veterans Coordinator contacted him to see if he could set up a meeting during the National Indian Gaming Conference to be held in Phoenix the week of March 26<sup>th</sup>. Commissioner Begay set a meeting for Wednesday, March 27 from 9 a.m. to noon. The purpose of the meeting is to garner interest from Indian communities in Arizona and the Southwest and the gaming tribes to support an initiative started in the Florida Veteran office to build a National Indian Monument near the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C. The proposal has gained support from various tribes in the Southeast and across the U.S., including the Inter-tribal Council of Arizona.

There are now 36 tribes supporting the effort. The March 27<sup>th</sup> meeting is to be held at the Heard Museum. Commissioner Begay is extending an invitation to the Commissioners and Director Strickland to attend this meeting. He will provide details of the meeting to Katherine.

Commissioner Olson noted that he and Chairman Cushing are going to Washington D.C. to the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Conference next week. After discussion with VBC's and others, a few things have been added to the agenda to be addressed by the VA to improve the services that are being provided for Veteran benefits claimants.

The VA has done a great job in providing benefit questionnaires that were typically one or two pages. There are 71 of these forms addressing different health issues. A doctor can look at the form and all the information is there to rate that Veteran's claim for disability, rather than make the Veteran submit several pages of medical reports for the adjudicator to read.

For some reason, some of the VA Medical Centers and regional offices are still calling the Veteran in for exams. The VA is going to all this work to create these great questionnaires to make it easier to rate the Veteran's case. We question why they would require an exam as well when everything is there in the form to rate the Veteran's disability.

An example is the many Vietnam Veterans who are suffering from, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Parkinson's Disease or Ischemic Heart Disease. In cases of Ischemic Heart Disease and PTSD, the Veteran completed the disability benefit questionnaire, but the VA decided they would only accept the diagnosis of a VA doctor.

The VA did some great things and then caused themselves some problems that affect Veterans. These matters are being added to the agenda for review at the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Conference.

Katherine Harding, Executive Assistant to the Director, questioned if the V-wrap criteria would be addressed at the conference. She noted that our agency gets many calls regarding the V-wrap. ADVS met with Phoenix College and that is one of the targeted issues they are working on with Veterans. They were hoping the VA would look at this in correlation with what the G.I. bill does so that it is not a financial burden on Veterans. Commissioner Olson would like to review the V-wrap subject to see if the matter can be brought for discussion with the VA. Katherine will provide V-wrap information to Commissioner Olson.

**Open Discussion for the Good of the Order** – Katherine said Director Strickland will be attending a Military Veteran Employer Summit on Friday, March 1st at the National Guard Headquarters. Colonel Strickland will sit on a panel to discuss key issues relating to Veteran employment.

Other panel participants are Major General Hugo Salazar, Adjutant General of the National Guard, Director Carter from Department of Economic Security (DES), Director Espinoza from the Dept. of Labor, Vice President Boxer from the Arizona Commerce Authority (ACA), and Director Flint from Veterans Affairs (VA). Katherine will forward event details to the commissioners.

Chairman Cushing noted the newest Medal of Honor recipient is from North Dakota and is working in the oil fields. He is using his military training in the oil industry and running his own crew. More employers are learning that hiring a Veteran is a good investment; Veterans are dedicated and committed.

Commissioner Krula noted that it is encouraging to see a major corporation such as Wal-Mart taking the initiative to hire Veterans.

Chairman Cushing noted that he, as a Vietnam Veteran, is pleased that communities now are realizing the sacrifices our Veterans are making and the issues they are experiencing when they come home. It is good to see that companies, corporations, and communities are interested in doing what they can to honor and help our Veterans transition to civilian life. Another 35,000 Veterans are coming back this year. There will be an influx of Veterans coming into the VA system.

The new table top display has been received at ADVS and is being assembled with current information.

Mr. Krula inquired if one of the table top displays could be brought to the meeting for all commissioners to see firsthand. Judy will make it available at the next meeting.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Commissioner Hanson. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sanchez. The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m. The next Advisory Commission meeting will be held March 14, 2013.