

**SAN DIEGO COUNTY  
VETERANS ADVISORY COUNCIL MINUTES**  
Saturday, April 12, 2014, 9:30 a.m.  
San Diego County Veterans Service Office  
5560 Overland Ave. Ste. 310, San Diego, CA 92123

Meeting held at the Veterans Museum and Memorial Center in Balboa Park (VMMC)

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Nancy Owen; Mary Beth Newton; John Weaver; Laurie Martell; Tom Splitgerber; Will Rodriguez; Terry Jensen

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Michael Robledo (U); Justin Singer (U); Ben Dillingham III (E)

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Steve Arends, One VA Co-chair; Neal Asper; Sterling McHale, Supervisor Ron Roberts office; James H. Kimber, Congressional candidate; Anthony Bernal, San Diego City Council President Todd Gloria's office;

**1. Call to Order**

Mary Beth Newton Chair, called the VAC meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

**3. Introductions/Public Input (3 minutes)**

**4. Approval of Minutes**

Motion was made and seconded to approve prior meeting minutes.

**5. Chairman's Remarks**

Mary Beth Newton reminded everyone to finish the mandatory Ethics training required by the San Diego County. Instructions were passed out to members on the website for training and certificate.

**Legislative:**

Mary Beth passed out Steve Arends Legislative Report from the UVC meeting she attended (Attachment A)

Anthony Bernal, Director of Business and Community Projects, Todd Gloria's office, introduced himself and passed out his business card.

Sterling McHale spoke about the partnership program between the County and the libraries to provide services to veterans.

Sterling also announced May 10<sup>th</sup> is the grand opening of the County's Waterfront Park, at the County Administration Center (Attachment B)

Steve Arends invited everyone to attend the second UVC legislative forum meeting right after VAC meeting.

### **One VA**

Steve Arends updated the next One VA meeting will be at the VA Regional office on Wednesday the 16<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> floor conference room. Also added no one has been selected to be the Regional Office Director.

Steve said Members of the One VA will be given a copy of the new draft charter.

### **Chula Vista Veterans Home (CVVH)**

Neal Asper reminded about the Annual Golf Classic on Thursday May 8<sup>th</sup>. Also, the Founders Day Celebration at CVVH is on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of May, 11 am to 2 pm.

Steve added they are working with Federal Legislators of the House and Senate to get the VA Work Study program reestablished nationwide. The House has approved reactivation of the program for all state veterans homes and state cemeteries. The US Senate, as of this week, has failed to act on it. The veterans homes are getting by with volunteers and state employees.

He also thanked Neal Asper for attending the VAC meetings for the last 4 years.

### **United Veterans Council (UVC)**

No update

### **Veterans Week and Veterans Day Parade**

Mary Beth shared an email from Jack Harkins requesting participation for a Tuesday April 15 Town Hall meeting at 9 am at the Veterans Village to help campaign for the passage of Prop 41, featuring local and state officials.

### **County Veterans Service Office (CVSO)**

Tom said the State meeting will be in Santa Rosa May 5<sup>th</sup> through May 8<sup>th</sup>. Also spoke about the library partnership with the county. Volunteers are needed to accomplish this project; regular staff is not enough.

### **Community Reports**

Laurie Martell saw Debbie Dominick, the Director of the Aspire Center, and said there are 15 veterans getting services currently and they are looking forward to getting up to their 40 veteran capacity.

### **Unfinished Business**

Veterans Hiring Policy: Responses from 15 out of 18 San Diego County cities have been received to the Veteran's Hiring Policy follow up letter. Mary Beth feels this is enough to compile a report for the Board of Supervisors. She will work on a report and share it at the next VAC meeting for discussion.

Ex-officio position vacancy follow up: Letter was drafted by Mary Beth and will be going to Admiral Lorge, Commander Navy Region Southwest, asking for his support in filling this vacancy. The letter will be going out within the next couple of weeks.

## **8. New Business**

No new business

**9. Closing Remarks**

No.

**10. Meeting Adjourned:** The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

A

- **VA Work-Study at State Veterans Homes.** The current legislation authorizing this federal program for veterans working part-time at state Veterans Homes like ours in Chula Vista expired on 6/30/13. Also applies to all state veterans' cemeteries. An extension of this VA program has been in work by both the U.S. House and Senate throughout 2013. All 65 local veterans who are in college and were working part-time at the Chula Vista Veterans Home under this VA Program, at \$8/hr, became unpaid volunteers on 7/1/13. In the meantime, the program is stopped, and no student vets are working at our Veterans Home. Language to restore this VA Work-Study program was included in **HR-357** which passed the U.S. House on 2/3/14 with a **unanimous 390-0** vote. Restoration of this VA program was included in **S-1950**, the "Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Restoration Act," which failed passage in the Senate. Major portions of S-1950 were included in a revised omnibus bill, **S-1982**, on 2/3/14. That bill, too, failed on 2/27/14 in the Senate. Portions of S-1982 will now be proposed as individual pieces of legislation, hoping to achieve passage into law. **Section 202 of S-1982** had included the re-authorization of this VA Work-Study program for all 50 states.
- **New federal legislative web site.** Each of my monthly UVC legislative reports for years has encouraged readers to go to the <http://Thomas.loc.gov> web site to get current info on all congressional legislation and hearings. The federal government is now replacing this Library of Congress web site with a new [www.Congress.gov](http://www.Congress.gov) web site. Now it might take you to a beta web site at: <http://beta.congress.gov/about> which explains why the previous web site is being closed. The format is completely changed from what we've used for the past 20 years at the Library of Congress web site. The "Thomas.loc" web site is still operational as of 3/20/14.
- **HR-3469 "Support Earned Recognition For Veterans (SERV) Act."** Rep Darrell Issa (R, 49th) introduced this bi-partisan bill on 11/18/13 to eliminate abuses in the veterans benefit system and ensure only individuals who have actually served in the military can qualify to receive government contracting preferences and similar benefits. This bill has **111 co-sponsors** already, including Rep Juan Vargas (D, 51st) and Rep Duncan Hunter (R, 50th). The HVAC's Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs has this bill for action now.
- **HR-3507 "21st Century Care For Military & Veterans Act."** On 11/15/13 Rep Scott Peters (D, 52nd) introduced this bipartisan bill that would expand coverage of telehealth services to active duty military, their dependents, military retirees and all veterans. This would expand reimbursement policies covering telehealth services including mental health monitoring under both Tricare and the VA. This bill now has 4 co-sponsors, none from CA. Both the HASC & HVAC's Subcommittee on Health have this for action.
- **HR-813 "Putting Veterans Funding First Act."** Due to the success of the biennial 2 year funding of the VA's healthcare budget, this bill was introduced 2/25/13 to expand advance appropriations for certain VA discretionary accounts, to include Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) and the National Cemetery Administration (NCA). The effective date of this legislation would be fiscal year 2016, if enacted. Right now there's only one member of the U.S. House from CA who's among the 22 co-sponsors, and that's Rep Julia Brownley (D, 26th, Westlake Village in Ventura County). Companion bill in the U.S. Senate is **S-932**, with only **7 co-sponsors**, none of whom are from CA. The VFW and other VSO's are urging Congress to enact HR-813 to cover the VA's entire discretionary budget one year ahead of schedule, to protect veterans' benefits in case of a government shutdown. Advanced appropriations also saves the USDVA money, by allowing extended contracts with predictable funding assured.
- **HR-32 & S-734.** Rep Joe Wilson introduced the new "Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act," HR-32 to address the SBP offset to DIC payments. This effort began over 12 years ago, and is called the "widow's tax." Rep Susan Davis (D, 53rd, San Diego), Rep Juan Vargas (D, 51st, Chula Vista), Rep Scott Peters (D, 51st, San Diego) and Rep Duncan Hunter (R, 50th, El Cajon) are among the **196 co-sponsors** for this HR-32 legislation. The HASC's Subcommittee On Military Personnel now has HR-32 for action. This legislation affects over 55,000 military widows, and would finally repeal the requirement for reduction of survivor annuities under the Survivor Benefit Plan to offset the receipt of survivors' Dependency and Indemnity Compensation. S-734 was introduced as a companion bill to HR-32 on 4/16/13. Sen Barbara Boxer and Sen Feinstein from CA are among the **32 co-sponsors on S-734**. The SASC has S-734 for action now.
- **HR-303.** Same number as last Congress, now called the "**Retired Pay Restoration Act**" and again this new bill for the 113th Congress authorizes the full concurrent receipt of retired military pay and veterans' disability compensation for retirees regardless of disability rating. Laws have been changed over the years to give concurrent receipt to military retirees with VA disability ratings of over 50%, but not for the majority of veterans with less disability ratings. Rep Gus Bilirakis (R, FL) introduced the new HR-303 on 1/15/13. Only 7 members of the U.S. House from CA are among the **84 co-sponsors** for this bill, and that includes two from our County,

- Rep Duncan Hunter (R, 50th, El Cajon) and Rep Scott Peters (D, 52nd, San Diego). HR-303 has been assigned to both the HASC's Subcommittee on Military Personnel, and to the HVAC's Subcommittee on Disability Assistance & Memorial Affairs.
- **HR-333. Disabled Veterans Tax Elimination Act.** This legislation is almost identical to HR-303, as this bipartisan bill would permit retired members of the armed forces with a service-connected disability rating of less than 50% to receive both retirement pay and VA disability compensation, known as "concurrent receipt." HR-333 has **114 co-sponsors** after being introduced by Rep Sanford Bishop (D, GA 2nd) on 1/22/13. Rep Bishop is the ranking member of the U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veteran Affairs. Locally, Rep Scott Peters, Rep Duncan Hunter, Rep Susan Davis, and Rep Juan Vargas are among the **114 co-sponsors**. The HVAC's Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs has it.
- **HR-357. GI Bill Tuition Fairness Act of 2013.** This bipartisan bill would allow veterans using the Post 9/11 GI Bill to pay in-state tuition rates at public colleges and universities even if they don't meet a state's residency requirements. Bill has 50 co-sponsors, and Rep Duncan Hunter (R, 50th, El Cajon) and Rep Scott Peters (D, 52nd) are among the 7 from CA. HR-357 passed the House unanimously with a 390-0 vote on 2/3/14, and **included re-authorization of the VA Work-Study program for student veterans working part-time at state veteran facilities. The Senate's VA Committee has HR-357 for action as of 2/4/14.**
- **S-234. Retired Pay Restoration Act of 2013.** This Senate bill is very similar to both H.R. 303 and H.R. 333, addressing the concurrent receipt issue. Sen Harry Reid's S.234 has 20 co-sponsors, including Sen Barbara Boxer from CA. This bill was introduced on 2/7/13, and the SASC has it for action.
- **HR-1714. Shelter Our Servicemembers Act.** Introduced by Rep Scott Peters (D, 52nd, San Diego) on 4/24/13 establishes a grant pilot program, administered through HUD and the VA, that would provide senior veterans permanent, non-transitional housing. Locally, Rep Susan Davis (D, 53rd) and Rep Juan Vargas (D, 51st) are among the **17 co-sponsors** for this bill. The HVAC's Subcommittee on Health has this for action.
- The American Legion is holding its 54th Washington Legislative Conference in DC during 3/25-3/26/14.

#### California State Bills

- 2/21/14 was the last day to introduce new bills in our state Legislature. Over 1,000 new bills were introduced, including 26 that are veteran-related.
- ASM Toni Atkins and ASM Rocky Chavez from San Diego County have new assignments in the Assembly. Toni is now the Assembly Speaker, and Rocky has been appointed to the Assembly's Rules Committee.
- The American Legion holds its Annual Day at the State Capitol on 4/30/14. For more info, contact the Legislative Advocate's Office, Dana Nichol via e-mail at: [dana.nichol@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dana.nichol@sbcglobal.net).
- The VFW will hold its annual VFW Day at the State Capitol on 5/14/14. Dana Nichol is the POC for the VFW.
- **AB-1557.** This bill would increase the number of voting members on the Board of Governors of the California Community College system to 18 by adding a voting student member who is a member of the military, and a veteran who has demonstrated leadership in the field of veterans' affairs. Was introduced 1/27/14, and the Assembly's Committee on Higher Education has AB-1557 for action.
- Our UVC Legislative Forum was held at the VMCM on 3/8/14. Participants recommended that the UVC support ASM Rocky Chavez's **AB-13** which would exempt veterans from having to pay the higher out-of-state tuition at state universities and colleges. Participants also recommended the UVC support **AB-1637** which would allow the word "Veteran" to be imprinted on California drivers licenses. Forum attendees also unanimously agreed to support **AB-2703** which would give the CVSO's assured funding. **SB-1440** was also discussed at the Forum, which would change how the state charges fees for residents at our CA Veterans Homes. Senator Ben Hueso will chair the hearing set for 4/8/14 on the merits of SB-1440, which had been introduced previously as AB-488 on 2/15/11. AB-488 was rejected then by the Appropriations Committee, due to cost, as Veterans Home residents who are spouses of disabled veterans would be able to pay less.
- **AB-2201.** ASM Rocky Chavez introduced this bill to automatically sign up young men to the Selective Service System when applying for a new or renewed CA drivers license.
- **SB-1113.** Sen Knight's bill would enhance tax benefits for CA's disabled veterans, as it would allow 100% disabled veterans property tax refunds going back 8 years when they have to wait for their VA disability.
- **AB-2311.** This would allow veterans to stay on general assistance while awaiting their VA benefits.
- To obtain updates on all California legislation, go to: <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/bilinfo.html>. You can sign up at this web site to get e-mail updates whenever action is taken on any of the bills that are of interest to you.

**UVC's next Legislative Forum is here at the VMCM, downstairs, on Saturday, 4/12/14, beginning at 10:30 AM. Focus is on new veterans' legislation. For more info, contact Kent Smith (760-749-6884) or Steve Arenus (619-421-1521). They can provide you with a copy of the minutes from the first Forum held on 3/8/14.**



THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
INVITES YOU TO BE A PART OF HISTORY AT THE

# GRAND OPENING

OF THE  
COUNTY'S WATERFRONT PARK

## MAY 10, 2014

FESTIVITIES BEGIN AT 10 AM

A CELEBRATION OF OUR REGION'S DIVERSE ARTS AND CULTURE  
INCLUDING A VARIETY OF FUN-FILLED ENTERTAINMENT,  
RECREATION, AND CIVIC PRIDE

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