

## Council on Veterans Programs

Meeting Minutes – September 18, 2025 | 10:30am

In-Person at Wisconsin Veterans Museum with a Virtual Option

### Council Members Present:

Paul F. Fisk	American Legion Dept. of WI
Michelle Matuszak	American Red Cross
Dale Wiegand	AMVETS
Colin Moten	County Veteran Service Officers Assn.
Larry Hill	Disabled American Veterans
Phillip Landgraf	Marine Corps League
Don Korte, Jr.	Military Officers Assoc. of America
William Lobeck	Military Order of the Purple Heart
Nellie De Baker	Polish Legion of American Veterans
Michael Ayers	The Retired Enlisted Association
Jackie Leon	Technical Colleges
Michael Panaro	UW Systems
Michael Furgal	VFW Department of Wisconsin
Thomas Banner	Vietnam Veterans of America
Matthew Schroeder	WAIVU
David Zien	WI Assoc. of Concerned Veteran Org.
William Hustad	Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans

### Absent:

Scott Griffith	Paralyzed Veterans of America
William Sims	National Association for Black Veterans

### Inactive:

United Women Veterans

### Others Present (not inclusive):

Jordan Tilleson (VFW)  
City of Fitchburg  
Commander Ron Griffin  
Representative Penterman  
Catherine Heitman

### WDVA Staff Present:

Joseph Hoey, Asst. Deputy Secretary  
Dawn LaFond, Executive Assistant  
Mindy Allen, Rules Coordinator  
Evan Thompson, IT

Chair Paul Fisk called the meeting to Order at 10:31am. Roll call was taken, 19 members in attendance; a quorum was present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Representative Penterman, Assembly Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs and his staff Catherine Heitman were present and discussed his background and issues that affect veterans. Discussion focused on legislation, including the MIA Program and property tax credits, which are still up for review.

Minutes from June 19, 2025 were reviewed:

- MOTION: Kim Queen made a motion to approve the minutes, second by Michael Furgal; minutes were unanimously approved.

Executive Staff Assistant Dawn LaFond provided an Administrative Update.

- COVP Biennial Reports were due on 09.15.2025 and there were a few outstanding, making one final request to provide updates. The reports are due 09.30.2025 to the Veterans Legislative Clerks.
- Send any leadership updates to Dawn as they become available.
- 2025 Public Records and Ethnics training will be provided by WDVA Chief Legal Counsel at 12:30pm today. Anyone who does not attend the training (in person or virtually), will need to complete the online training by the mid-November 2025 due date.
- Updated VORP maps were provided in members' folders.

Assistant Deputy Secretary Joseph Hoey provided updates to the Council covering the following topics:

- Co-sponsorship emails that are sent are opportunities for COVP organizations to contact their legislators to inform them of their support of a Bill.
- Discussed the recent closure of 2 of WDVA's Veterans Housing Recovery Program (VHRP) sites, necessitated by the republican controlled legislature's failure to provide the funding in the state budget to keep all three sites open. Explained the Chippewa Falls and Green Bay locations were closed to focus efforts on Union Grove as it was the facility in the best physical condition. Reported that all veterans in our care were successfully placed in other programs or graduated to stable housing.
- Discussed Senate Bill 411, Senator Jacque's proposal that would lower the threshold for the Veterans & Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit, fund the UW Missing-in-Action Recovery and Identification Project, and provide \$1.9M for VHRP. Noted that the funds would allow WDVA to reopen the Green Bay site within a couple of months and move forward with a contract with an individual who has offered to build a new 48-bed facility in Chippewa Falls which could be open in about one year.
- Discussed the pullback in WDVA's Veteran Outreach and Recovery Program (VORP) from 16 regions back down to 11 as a result of the Governor's request for funding being rejected by the republican-controlled majority in the legislature.
- Noted that Department was working with the Milwaukee War Memorial Center to facilitate the awarding of the \$5M grant included in the biennial budget and with the Veterans Community Project to facilitate award of the \$2.5M grant in the budget for tiny homes for homeless veterans.

Member reports from American Legion, American Red Cross, AMVETS, County Veteran Service Officers Association, Disabled American Veterans, Military Officers Association of America, Polish Legion of American Veterans, The Retired Enlisted Association, Technical Colleges, UW Systems, VW Department of Wisconsin, Vietnam Veterans of America, Wisconsin Association of Concerned Veterans Organization Wisconsin American GI Forum and Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans.

- Military Birthdays
  - Cake cutting celebrations in the Rotunda of the State Capitol in recognition of the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the three branches of the Military formed in 1775:
    - 10.13.2025 at 12pm-1pm | Navy
    - 11.10.2025 at 12pm-1pm | Marines

Public Comments:

- None

Election of Officers:

- Chair
  - MOTION: Kim Queen made a motion to re-nominate Paul Fisk; no other nominations so Don Korte motioned to accept the nomination and seconded by Larry Hill; motion closed and passed unanimously
- Vice Chair
  - MOTION: Nellie De Baker made a motion to re-nominate Mike Furgal; n other nominations so Larry Hill motioned to accept the nomination and seconded by Kim Queen; motion closed and passed unanimously
- Secretary
  - MOTION: Larry Hill made a motion to re-nominate Nellie DeBaker; no other nominations, so Don Korte motioned to accept the nomination and seconded by Kim Queen; motion closed and passed unanimously

Future Agenda Items:

- Add as standing agenda item: Education on benefits and services available to veterans
  - Suggestion: Heat for Heroes
- ACTION: Provide any future items to Dawn LaFond at [dawn.lafond1@dva.wisconsin.gov](mailto:dawn.lafond1@dva.wisconsin.gov) by 11.15.2025

Next Meetings:

- December 18, 2025 –Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, 2135 Rimrock Rd, Madison, WI
- 2026 Dates – TBD

Motion to adjourn the meeting was moved by Nellie DeBaker, second by Don Korte and carried on a vote to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 11:57am.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Fisk, Chair