Council on Veterans Programs

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

In-Person at Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs 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
Don Korte, Jr.	Military Officers Assoc. of America
Scott Griffith	Paralyzed Veterans of America
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	WAICU
David Zien	WI Assoc. of Concerned Veteran Org.
William Hustad	Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans
David Zien	WI Assoc. of Concerned Veteran Org.
William Hustad	Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans
George Banda	Wisconsin American GI Forum

Absent:

Phillip Landgraf	Marine Corps League
William Sims	National Association for Black Veterans
William Lobeck	Military Order of the Purple Heart

Inactive:

United Women Veterans

Others Present (not inclusive):

Jordan Tilleson (VFW)
Col Jeannie Jeanetta (WI Nat'l Guard)
Patricia Banner
Chris Hanson (BOVA)
John Morgan (BOVA)
Travis West (West & Dunn)
Morris Sadicario (AmLegion)
George Stoeber (VFW)

WDVA Staff Present:

Joseph Hoey, Asst. Deputy Secretary
Dawn LaFond, Executive Assistant
Patrice Gilman, IT
Jeremy Lyon, Division Administrator

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.

Introduction of other attendees was given:

- Travis West, West & Dunn
- Lieutenant Colonel Jeannie Jeanetta, Chief of Staff, Wisconsin National Guard

- George Stoeber, VFW
- Morris Sadicario, American Legion
- Chris Hanson, BOVA
- John Morgen, BOVA
- Jeremy Lyon, WDVA

Travis J West, Founding Partner at West & Dunn, a Wisconsin Law Firm that focuses on assisting the veterans of the United States Armed Forces, provided information on the history of concerns about bad actors preying on veterans who are seeking to access their Federal VA benefits, especially since the passage of the federal PACT Act in 2022, including updates on various proposals introduced, but not passed in the U.S. Congress. Described competing approaches that would either reinstate criminal penalties for unaccredited claim representatives who charge unauthorized fees to veterans (previously referred to as the GUARD Act) or alternatively, require the VA to automatically recognize applicants for accreditation after 90 days, even if they fail to meet current accreditation standards (PLUS Act)

Minutes from September 18, 2025 were reviewed:

- MOTION: Don Korte made a motion to approve the minutes, second by Thomas Banner; minutes were unanimously approved.

Executive Staff Assistant Dawn LaFond provided an Administrative Update.

- For any travel that is requested by the OOS, including the COVP meetings, effective January 1, rates for the following have increased:
    - Meals
        - Breakfast $10 → $11
        - Lunch $12 → $13
        - Dinner $23 → $24
    - In-state hotel rates have increased as well and differ upon where your travel brings you to
    - Please work with Dawn LaFond to ensure that the state rate and sales tax exemption are applied properly
    - Refer to the 2026 pocket guide for when meals are reimbursed and guidance on all state reimbursable expenses
        - <u>ACTION</u>: Dawn LaFond to send 2026 pocket guide when available

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

- WDVA Office of the Secretary and our Communications Team have been working with our veteran partners to raise awareness to protect veterans from so called Claim Sharks.
- The Legislature will more than likely pass legislation expanding eligibility for the Veterans designation on operators' licenses and identification cards to Guard and Reserve members. WDVA Veteran Benefits

staff has been working with County and Tribal Veteran Service Officers Association of Wisconsin on creating and maintaining uniform criteria for documentation required for the designation.

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

- Upcoming events and requests to support:
    - 03.29.2026 | Vietnam Veterans Day, Eau Claire area
        - Being considered is a reunion of the Premier Aging (Ageless) Vietnam Vet organizations to include:
            - Wisconsin Association of Concerned Veteran Organizations (WACVO& National NACVI)
            - WisVets Outreach Program, by the Wisconsin Department of Veteran Affairs (1972-1979)
            - Vietnam Veterans Advisory Council (VVAC)
            - VFW Vietnam Veterans Advisory Committee 1977- 1984
            - Agent Orange resolution declined at both Wisconsin State (Janesville) & VFW National (Los Angeles) Conventions, but passed after fierce Floor debate on both the State & National Convention Floors in 1982
            - Dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Wall, November 1982, Washington DC. The 172 Veterans on four buses coordinated by Gary Wetzel Congressional Medal of Honor, Dave Zien VFW Vietnam Veterans Director & Governor Lee Dreyfus had many of the expenses paid
    - TBD | 25th Anniversary of 911
        - All fire departments and law enforcement stations to put on the map their highways
    - 12.20.2026 | Space Force 4th Birthday
    - 2027 | National Guard's 390th Birthday

Public Comments:

- Chris Hanson mentioned to strongly encourage officials and all others to promote recruitment of armed forces and Future Leaders of the Military in high schools especially during Career Days – recruitment and applications were down but have increased over the past year.
    - John Morgen and Thomas Banner stressed that when opportunities are presented students are more likely to express interest, especially when scholarships are available.
    - Lieutenant Colonel Jeanetta suggests identifying what high-level types of careers and benefits that available to engage interest.

Future Agenda Items:

- March 2026: Information from the Department of Transportation on location and identification of veteran bridges and highways.
- March 2026: Heat for Heroes.
- TBD: Wisconsin Department of Tourism update on activities, along with potential improvements to promote veteran sites, events and activities.
- TBD: Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs to provide a status of all military equipment located in Wisconsin.
- ACTION: Provide any future items to Dawn LaFond at dawn.lafond1@dva.wisconsin.gov by 02.15.2025

Next Meetings:

- March 26, 2026 – Wisconsin Veterans Museum
- June, September and December – Dates TBD

Motion to adjourn the meeting was moved by Nellie DeBaker, second by Thomas Banner and carried on a vote to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 12:07pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Fisk, Chair