

## Council on Veterans Programs

Meeting Minutes – March 26, 2026 | 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
Scott Griffith	Paralyzed Veterans of America
Nellie De Baker	Polish Legion of American Veterans
Jackie Leon	Technical Colleges
Michael Panaro	UW Systems
Michael Furgal	VFW Department of Wisconsin
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:**

Colin Moten	County Veteran Service Officers Assn.
William Lobeck	Military Order of the Purple Heart
William Sims	National Association for Black Veterans
Michael Ayers	The Retired Enlisted Association
Thomas Banner	Vietnam Veterans of America

### **Inactive:**

United Women Veterans

### **Others Present (not inclusive):**

Jordan Tilleson (VFW)  
Ron Griffin (AMVETS)

### **WDVA Staff Present:**

Joseph Hoey, Asst. Deputy Secretary  
Dawn LaFond, Executive Assistant  
Evan Thompson, IT  
Jeremy Lyon, Division Administrator  
Andrew Martin, SAA  
Larry Graves, SAA  
Mindy Allen, Admin Rules Coordinator

Chair Paul Fisk called the meeting to Order at 10:33am. Roll call was taken, 17 members in attendance; a quorum was present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Introduction of other attendees was given:

- Larry Graves, WDVA SAA

- Andrew Martin, WDVA SAA
- Jeremy Lyon, WDVA Division Administrator

Minutes from December 18, 2025 were reviewed:

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

Executive Staff Assistant Dawn LaFond provided an Administrative Update.

- Next meeting will be June 11, 2026 at Union Grove Veterans
  - Tentative agenda:
    - 11:00am-12:30pm | COVP Meeting
    - 12:30pm-1:00pm | Lunch
    - 1:00pm-1:30pm | Tour the facility, including the new kitchen
    - 1:30pm-2:20pm | Attend activity with the Members
    - 2:30pm-3:30pm | BOVA Meeting
  - Union Grove leadership will participate in the day
- Appointment/reappointment letters and oaths will be sent in May to Commanders/Presidents of the following COVP organizations whose terms are expiring 06.30.2026:
  - American Legion
  - County Veteran and Tribal Service Organization Association (CTVSOA)
  - Disabled American Veterans (DAV)
  - Jewish War Veterans
  - Marine Corps League (MCL)
  - Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
  - Wisconsin American GI Forum

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

- Legislature will not meet again until January 2027 except to maybe take up a tax relief/school funding bill.
- Gave an overview of the 2025-2026 Legislative Session
  - Veteran Specific Bills already passed and signed into law
    - [2025 Senate Bill 38](#) (Act 50) personalized registration plate fees for gold star family
  - Bills that passed both houses and will be sent to the Governor for signing:
    - [2025 Assembly Bill 597](#) which creates a matching \$25 grant program for the private VA Funded Homeless Transition programs.
    - [2025 Senate Bill 387](#) which allows Guard and Reserve Members to put veteran status on their operators' licenses or identification cards.
    - [2025 Senate Bill 810](#) which increases the stipend payment for Military Funeral Honors from \$50 to \$100, which includes language making Hmong Lao fighters



## WDVA Education | Division of Veterans Benefits Overview

- Jeremy Lyon provided a high-level overview of benefits that the WDVA offers to veterans and their dependents with an in-depth discussion held on the following:
  - Homelessness in Wisconsin, including the definition of a homeless veteran, most homeless veterans are located outside of Milwaukee and Madison in mostly rural communities.
  - Grant for Camp American Legion.
  - Wisconsin GI Bill and eligibility from five (5) years down to three (3) years for veterans, spouses and their dependents.
  - PACT Act and how claims will still be coming through the system.
- CVSOs, through COVP, have expressed their appreciation on how quickly the VBRC has been processing applications and claims.

Member reports from American Legion, American Red Cross, AMVETS, 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.

- Membership changes – thank you for your service
  - American Red Cross will be an inactive member of COVP, effective June 2026
  - Paralyzed Veterans of American will have a NEW COVP Member, Christina Baurichter, who will be replacing Scott Griffith, effective April 2026.
- Upcoming events and requests to support:
  - 03.29.2026 @1:00pm | Vietnam Veterans Day Ceremony, Klossner-Dietzler VFW Post 5729, *Medford*
  - 04.11.2026 @9:00am-12:00pm | Angels to Heroes and White Paws German Sheperd Rescue’s “Dogs to Veterans” Program Bowling Fundraiser, Buzz Social, *Green Bay*
  - 04.29.2026 @5:30pm | MIA Program, UW Madison Biotech Bldg, *Madison*
  - May/June | MOU Signing for the Commandant’s House, King Veterans Home
  - 05.16.2026 @9:00am-3:00pm | Armed Forces Day, *Fort McCoy*
  - 05.23.2026 | Milwaukee VA Memorial Day Picnic, *Milwaukee*
  - 06.12.2026 @10:00am-12:00pm | Veterans Lunch, Neville Public Museum, *Green Bay*
  - 06.10.2026-06.13.2026 | VFW State Convention, Central Wisconsin Convention Center, *Rothschild*
  - 06.11.2026-06.13.2026 | DAV State Convention, Oneida Hotel & Conference Center, *Green Bay*
  - 06.19.2026-06.22.2026 | AMVETS State Convention, Oneida Hotel & Conference Center, *Green Bay*
  - 07.06.2026 @9:30am-5:00pm | Military & Veterans Family Day, Milwaukee County Zoo, *Milwaukee*
  - 07.11.2026 @1:00pm-10:00pm | Honor and Valor Outdoors Veterans Benefit, Pearly Gates Bar & Grill, *Green Bay*
  - 07.27.2026 | Annual Fred White Memorial Golf Tournament, Oneida Golf & Country Club, *Green Bay*

Public Comments:

- A Proclamation by Governor Evers for the USS WISCONSIN SSBN 827 will be signed on or around August 27, 2027.
  - The WDVA is working with a Friends Group to celebrate this event possibly in conjunction with an America 250 event.

Future Agenda Items:

- June 11, 2026: Net proceeds of mining discussion
- September 2026: Update to Camp Randall Veterans Project
- TBD: Heat for Heroes
- TBD: Wisconsin Department of Tourism update on activities, along with potential improvements to promote veteran sites, events and activities.

Next Meetings:

- June 11, 2026 – Union Grove Veterans Home
- September – Possibly UW Camp Randall
- December – Wisconsin Veterans Museum

Motion to adjourn the meeting was moved by Dale Wiegand, second by Kim Queen and carried on a vote to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 12:17pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Fisk, Chair