



State Administration and Veterans' Affairs Interim Committee

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57th Montana Legislature

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REVISED DRAFT AGENDA

Subject to Change

(Contact Sheri Heffelfinger 444-3596 for latest)

Subcommittee on Veterans' Affairs

Meeting #3 (2 days)

Thursday, November 15, 2001

Room 102, State Capitol

- 1:30 p.m. Roll Call
Approval of minutes from September 26-27, 2001, meeting
- 1:45 p.m. Update on effort to establish a state veterans' cemetery in western Montana
Mr. "C.E." Crookshanks, Gen. "M.Y." Foster, BG, USA, (Ret.)
- 2:00 p.m. Research briefs and staff analysis, **Ms. Sheri Heffelfinger, LSD**
- Veteran population statistics and demographics
Current anatomy of federal and state services in Montana
Focus on the MVAD structure, funding, and service coordination
Overview of structure, funding and special programs of other state veterans affairs divisions or departments
- 3:00 p.m. Fiscal analysis and overview related to state financing of veteran services,
Mr. Todd Younkin, Legislative Fiscal Division
- 3:30 p.m. BREAK
- 3:45 p.m. Staff overview briefing on grievance procedures currently available to veterans through various channels
- 4:30 p.m. Update on activities related to health care issues outlined in the "Caring for our Wounded" core document presented to the Subcommittee August 6, 2001,
VVA Chapter 626

REVISED DRAFT AGENDA
Subcommittee on Veterans' Affairs
Meeting #3
Day 1, Thursday, November 15, 2001
Room 102, State Capitol

- 4:45 p.m. Staff update SJR 5 Working Group
Presentation of Issues and Options Paper #1 (See outline Attachment A)
- 5:00 p.m. Staff review of Friday agenda
- Recess to Friday, Nov. 16, 8:00 a.m.

REVISED DRAFT AGENDA
Subcommittee on Veterans' Affairs
Meeting #3
Day 2 - Friday, November 16, 2001
Room 102, State Capitol

8:00 a.m. Introduction of panelists and discussion questions, **Ms. Sheri Heffelfinger**,
Research Analyst, Legislative Services Division, facilitator and moderator

UMBRELLA DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ALL PANELS:

- (1) Please *BRIEFLY* summarize what you or your agency does.
- (2) *CONCISELY* explain how you or your agency currently conducts outreach, communicates with veterans, and coordinates services.
- (3) If a veteran brings a problem to you or your agency or has a complaint, how does it get addressed?
- (4) How could outreach, communication, service coordination and problem-solving be improved and what should be the state's role in facilitating these improvements?

THEME FOCUS:

outreach, communication, service coordination, problem-solving

OBJECTIVE:

Provide the Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee with information, analysis, and any recommendations relevant to the Issues and Options paper #1: Selecting Options. (See outline at Attachment A)

8:15 a.m. **Benefit Claims**

Panelists:

John Peterson, VA Fort Harrison, Veterans' Service Center Manager
Ruddy Reilly, MVAD and American Legion Benefit Claims Representative
Mike Secrease, national VVA VSO
Robert Schwegel, VFW, VSO
Keith Heavy Runner, Tribal Veteran Representative
Lenni Johnson, veteran consumer and volunteer
John Denherder, WWII and Korean Veteran

9:00 a.m. **Employment and Training**

Panelists:

Fred Gense, Chief of Vocational Rehabilitation and Education
Polly LaTray, U.S. Department of Labor
Mr. Byron Erickson, Local Veteran Employment Representative
Mr. Grant Ellison, Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist
Russell McKinney, Great Falls

REVISED DRAFT AGENDA
Subcommittee on Veterans' Affairs

Meeting #3
Day 2, Friday, November 16, 2001
Room 102, State Capitol

9:45 a.m. **Health Care, Mental Health Care, and Chemical Dependency**

Panelists:

Lynn Nilan, VA Fort Harrison, Registered Nurse and Quality Manager
Cindy Heaton, VA Fort Harrison, Registered Nurse and Manager of
Network Authorization
Greg Burham, Missoula Vet Center
Tony Rizzo, Great Falls Counselor, Vet Center Contract
Ann Hamerla, County Cooperative Health Center, Lewis & Clark County
Pete Formaz, C.C.D.C., Veteran
John Denherder, WWII and Korean Veteran
Mike Hampson, Vietnam Veteran
Bonnie Adee, state mental health ombudsman

11:00 a.m. **Homelessness**

Panelists:

Gary Weglarz, VA Homeless Coordinator
Jim Nolan, DPHHS, Intergovernmental Human Services Bureau
Lyle Conkol, Housing and Urban Development
Shannon Sprenkle, Coordinator, Statewide Stand Down in Billings
Michael O'Neil, 1999 Standdown Health Care Clinic Coordinator, Member
Veterans' Resource Coalition
Pete Formaz, C.C.D.C., Veteran
*Staff will also provide info. from Bob Piaro, Veterans Assistance
Foundation Incorporated and Chris Oliver, VA Homeless Coordinator state
of Washington

11:45 a.m. **Veteran Service Organizations**

Panelists:

Ed Sperry and other rep (TBD), American Legion
Mike Hampson, Vietnam Veterans of America
Disabled American Veterans (TBD)
Dan Antoniette, Veterans of Foreign Wars

12:15 a.m. LUNCH BREAK

1:00 a.m. **Local Government and Community Issues**

Panelists:

Karolyn Loendorf, Lewis & Clark County Commissioner
Rod Brown, Lewis & Clark County Public Assistance Office

REVISED DRAFT AGENDA
Subcommittee on Veterans' Affairs

Meeting #3

Day 2, Friday, November 16, 2001

Room 102, State Capitol

- 2:15 p.m. **Safety nets and cost shifting**
What happens when a veteran falls into a service gap, encounters problems obtaining the benefits and services for which the veteran is eligible, or is shuffled between agencies? Are there safety nets? Are they sufficient? Are costs being shifted?
Panelists:
Pat Crowely, MVAD VSO
Mike Secrease, VVA VSO
Ray Reed, American Legion
Michael O'Neil, Aware, Inc.
Tony Rizzo, L.C.P.C., Contract Provider
Keith Heavyrunner, Blackfeet Tribal Veteran Representative
Dewey Hahlbolm, Vietnam Veteran
Pete Formaz, C.C.D.C., Veteran
John Peterson, VA Fort Harrison, Veterans' Service Center Manager
Cindy Heaton, VA Fort Harrison, Registered Nurse and Manager of Network Authorization
- 3:00 p.m. BREAK
- 3:15 p.m. **Structure and funding of state veteran services**
Based on the previous discussions, are changes needed in the structure and funding of state and local services? If so, what changes?
Panelists:
John Buck, Chairman, Board of Veterans' Affairs
Jim Jacobsen, Executive Director, MVAD
Major General Prendergast, The Adjutant General, Department of Military Affairs
Robin Homan, Senior and Long-term Care Ombudsman
Bruce Meyers, Coordinator of Indian Affairs
Karolyn Loendorf, Lewis and Clark County Commissioner
Hank Hudson, Administrator, Human and Community Services Division, DPHHS
Rod Brown, Director, Lewis and Clark County Public Assistance Office
- 4:00 p.m. Public Comment on Veterans Issues
- 4:30 p.m. **Executive Session on Issues and Options Paper #1:
Selecting Options for Further Consideration**
(See outline at Attachment A)

Instructions to staff
Review of agenda for next meeting
Adjournment

ATTACHMENT A

Outline of Staff Issues and Options Paper #1: Selecting Options for Further Consideration

**NOTE: Options will be further defined and developed in conjunction with an SJR 5 Working Group meeting on November 9 and through the discussion panels at the meeting. Also, there are other issues and options that staff will further outline and present at the Thursday, November 15, 2001, meeting during the staff presentation scheduled for 4:45 p.m.*

ISSUE #1: Outreach and communication: Is there a significant problem with coordinated outreach to veterans? If so, what are the roots of this problem? Is there a state role in improving coordinated outreach to veterans? If so, what approaches should be further explored by the Subcommittee as possible recommendations?

OPTIONS:

- A. Encourage local level and veteran service organization efforts, but take no defined state legislative action
- B. Establish a statewide outreach and coordination committee or advisory council to develop a strategic plan
- C. Designate the Board of Veterans Affairs as the lead agency in statute to work with various people and programs to develop and coordinate outreach and communication programs
- D. Establish a Department of Veterans Affairs, make the Director a cabinet-level official directly accountable to the Governor and on equal footing with other state departments. Delineate in statute its roles and responsibilities.
- E. Make the Department of Military Affairs the lead agency for Veterans' Affairs.
- F. Others?

ISSUE #2: **Interagency coordination, collaboration, cooperation:** Is there a significant problem with interagency coordination, collaboration, and cooperation? If so, what causes the problem? Is there a state role in addressing the problem? If so, what approaches should be further explored?

- A. Encourage coordination and cooperation among agencies, but without specific state legislation
- B. Establish an inter-agency coordinating council or advisory council or create a state veterans service coordinator position (similar to the coordinator on Indian Affairs or a coordinator for specific activities such as a state homeless veteran stand down coordinator)
- C. Direct the Board of Veterans Affairs to establish collaborative interagency agreements
- D. Establish a Department of Veterans Affairs, make the Director a cabinet-level official directly accountable to the Governor and on equal footing with other state departments. Delineate in statute its roles and responsibilities.
- E. Make the Department of Military Affairs the lead agency for Veterans' Affairs.
- F. Others?

- ISSUE #3:** **Problem solving:** Is there a problem with "passing the buck" or with agencies not having clearly defined responsibilities so that when a veteran encounters problems with "the system" they fall through the cracks? If so, what causes the problem? Is there a state role in addressing the problem? If so, what approaches should be further explored?
- A. Encourage coordination and cooperation among agencies, but without specific state legislation
 - B. Establish a veterans' ombudsman-type position.
 - C. Direct the Board of Veterans Affairs to create a "case management" program within the MVAD that will augment the benefit claims process, but which will be responsible for helping veterans identify current programs and to navigate through them, similar to a resource and referral program.
 - D. Establish a Department of Veterans Affairs, make the Director a cabinet-level official directly accountable to the Governor and on equal footing with other state departments. Delineate in statute its roles and responsibilities.
 - E. Make the Department of Military Affairs the lead agency for Veterans' Affairs.
 - F. Others?