

**Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service
National Advisory Committee Executive Committee Meeting
Tuesday, November 3, 2015 – 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.**

Call to Order: Ron Rolfes, National Representative, Forty & Eight, and Chairperson, Executive Committee (EC), called the meeting to order.

Invocation: The invocation was delivered by Edward Lilley, Deputy National Representative, The American Legion.

Pledge of Allegiance: The pledge was led by W. G. “Bill” Kilgore, National Representative, AMVETS.

Chairman’s Opening Remarks: Mr. Rolfes welcomed the Executive Committee to Washington, D.C.

Agenda Review: There were no revisions to the agenda. Colonel Charles Gallina, National Representative, Knights of Columbus, moved to approve the agenda, and Mr. Kilgore seconded it. **The motion carried.**

Roll Call: Members of the EC introduced themselves and roll call was duly recorded as follows:

	<u>Present (P)/ Absent (A)</u>
The American Legion	P
American Legion Auxiliary	P
American Red Cross	P
AMVETS	P
AMVETS Auxiliary	P
Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks	P
Blinded Veterans Association	P
Disabled American Veterans	A
Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary	P
Forty and Eight	P
Knights of Columbus	P
Marine Corps League	P
Masonic Service Association of North America	P
Military Order of the Purple Heart of the U.S.A.	P
National Society of Daughters of the American Revolution	P
Paralyzed Veterans of America	P
The Salvation Army	P
Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary	P
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.	P
Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.	P

VA and Other Staff and Guests Present:

David J. Shulkin, Under Secretary for Health, Veterans Health Administration

Matthew Collier, Special Assistant to the Secretary, MyVA Office of Strategic Partnerships

Jeffery Moragne, Director, Advisory Committee Management Office

Linda Schwartz, Assistant Secretary, Office of Policy and Planning

Todd Livick, Acting Executive Director, VHA Office of Communications and Chairperson, VAVS NAC

Sabrina C. Clark, Director, Voluntary Service Office, VACO and Deputy Chairperson, VAVS NAC

Mary Jo Munnelly, Staff Assistant, Voluntary Service Office, VACO

Christine Feeser, Voluntary Service Specialist, Voluntary Service Office, VACO

Ginny Hoover, Voluntary Service Specialist, Voluntary Service Office, VACO

Kevin Stanford, Acting VSO Liaison, VHA, VACO

Tony Burtley, Voluntary Service Specialist, Voluntary Service Office, VACO

Tyrone Green, Program Specialist, Voluntary Service Office, VACO

Karen O'Neal, Chief, VAVS, Erie VA Medical Center and VISN 4 Liaison, representing Ad Hoc Partnership Subcommittee

Lorna Hatch, Chief, VA Voluntary Service, VA Maine Healthcare System, Augusta, ME NAC Planning Committee

Sonja Brown, Chief, VA Voluntary Service, New Mexico VA Health Care System, Albuquerque, NM; 2015 NAC Host Site Representative

Rebecca Strauss, National VAVS Representative for MOCA and Treasurer, VAVS Partners, Inc.

Christopher Slawinski, Treasurer, James H. Parke Memorial Fund Board

Alicia Downs, Veterans Outreach Manager, The Mission Continues

Amanda Burke, Region III, Administrator, Team Rubicon

Brennan Mullaney, Mid-Atlantic Regional Director, Team Red, White, and Blue

Shereef Elnahal, 2015 White House Fellow with the Department of Veterans Affairs

Brandi Creighton, Voluntary Service Specialist Trainee, Washington DC VAMC

Cherelle Mitchell, Voluntary Service Specialist Trainee, Washington DC VAMC

Goals and Objectives: Mr. Rolfes reviewed the goals and objectives of the Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) National Advisory Committee (NAC) Executive Committee meeting, as listed in the meeting booklet:

1. Act as the governing body of the VAVS NAC in this interim period between Annual Meetings.
2. Be supportive of the NAC's primary objective of advising the VA on how to coordinate and promote volunteer activities within VA facilities, and matters relating to volunteerism.
3. Be apprised of programmatic issues pending within Voluntary Service and Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Headquarters since the 2015 Annual Meeting, and to hold discussions on any appropriate advisory actions.

4. Plan EC supportive actions to ensure follow-up on issues or business items from the 2015 Annual Meeting.
5. Provide an opportunity for VAVS NAC EC to hear from and have face-to-face time with VA senior leadership.
6. Receive an update from the James H. Parke Memorial Foundation Board concerning the Youth Scholarship program.
7. Receive an update from VAVS Partners, Inc. concerning the Annual Meeting.
8. Assess the 2015 Annual Meeting, finalize plans for the 2016 Annual Meeting, and address site selection for the 2017 Annual Meeting.
9. Review and assess submitted Recommendations intended for the 2016 Annual Meeting and be prepared to report on same for all NAC National Representatives.
10. Receive reports from the Recommendations Subcommittee, Volunteer of the Year Nomination Subcommittee, Recruitment Subcommittee, Membership Subcommittee, and the Ad Hoc Partnership Subcommittee.
11. Update the NAC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) as deemed necessary.
12. Discuss, as a group, any area within the VAVS program in need of additional progress.

Additions/Revisions to Minutes of EC Meeting held April 2015: The minutes were approved as written.

Review of the 69th NAC Annual Meeting Evaluations: Lorna Hatch, Chief, VA Maine Healthcare System and NAC Meeting Planner, reviewed the evaluations received from the 69th Annual Meeting. Overall, reviews were generally favorable; however, the Health and Information Fair did not perform as well as hoped, perhaps due to the crowded location. The responsiveness of the VAVS staff to problems and concerns received high marks. 98% found the agenda and assignment cards in their badge helpful, and the same percentage said that they would attend again. Some commenters questioned paying for a keynote speaker, although they found him interesting. They also found, as in years past, that the workshops needed to be geared towards volunteers instead of staff.

The meeting's keynote speakers, information, and networking opportunities received the most praise. Speaker timeliness and Sabrina Clark's presentation also received positive comments. Suggestions for improvement were to expand exhibitors, ensure that everyone receive recommendations, provide more social events, ensure the event has ample space, increase roundtable discussion time, offer more classes to staff, and to not schedule the meeting after National Volunteer week.

83% found the New Dep/Rep Training Presentation engaging and gained new ideas, though commenters wanted more audience participation, a starter package to take home, a title reflecting whether the presentation is focused nationally or locally, and legible printouts. The workshops received very positive reviews. In many of the workshops, audience participation received the lowest reviews at 77%. The Leadership Through Volunteerism workshop received high marks across the board. The Starting the Conversation workshop also did well, but only 77% found new ideas in the presentation, and comments indicated attendees dominated much of the conversation, and that it wandered into off-topic areas.

VAVS Update: Sabrina Clark, Director, Voluntary Service Office, gave the update and preparatory remarks for Dr. Shulkin's presentation. In the future, Mrs. Clark will be sending the Committee Dr. Shulkin's messages to VA employees if they are relevant. The VA is currently developing its strategic partnerships, an area where VAVS has 70 years of experience. Dr. Shulkin has also sought out good news stories within VA, and VAVS has many of those to share. Ensuring that the upcoming NAC meeting is approved swiftly is critically important. Mrs. Clark introduced Brandi Creighton and Cherelle Mitchell, technical career field trainees at the DC VAMC Medical Center. This program brings in new talent to VHA.

Mrs. Clark discussed the concept of LCI, Leadership, Collaboration, and Impact, and led a strategic discussion about these terms and the future of Voluntary Service. In terms of the Leadership piece of LCI, training all levels of staff at the VAVS Academy training sessions and throughout the year via modules is vital. VAVS is actively looking into getting more staff certified as Certified Administrators of Volunteer Services, issued by the Association for Healthcare Volunteer Resource Professionals. VAVS is also focused on identifying and duplicating best practices. Edward Eckroth, Blinded Veterans Association, asked whether the certification will be required for staff. Mrs. Clark and Christine Feeser, Voluntary Service Specialist, Voluntary Service Office, explained that it is not currently, but would be listed as a preference in subsequent position descriptions. Ms. Cara Day, Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary, asked whether the online training was available to all staff. Mrs. Clark confirmed that it would be. Mr. Eckroth asked whether the VISN chiefs and liaisons are ensuring that their staffs have access to this training. Mrs. Clark explained that although training is not currently their responsibility, change was possible. Karen O'Neal, Chief, VAVS, Erie VA Medical Center and VISN 4 Liaison, and Ms. Hatch shared that they stay informed on site issues via conference calls, open forums and in-person meetings.

Mrs. Clark pointed out that while collaboration is an important piece of VAVS, more can be done. Mr. Eckroth brought up that in the current version of the VHA Handbook, benefits issues are not an area of voluntary service, even though that is often how they are handled in the field. He asked whether it would be possible to change this when the Handbook is revised. Sonja Brown, Chief, VA Voluntary Service, New Mexico VA Health Care System, Albuquerque, seconded Mr. Eckroth's point and added that she has seen this issue cause confusion. Emil A. Franz, Marine Corps League, suggested that the

materials and tools that local facilities send to the National Reps be standardized, and Mr. Eckroth and Ms. Nancy O. Mooney, Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary, echoed his concern. Mr. Franz further noted that while many local hospitals are fantastic, many others don't provide material the NAC member organizations need; there are particular issues with local VAVS committee minutes.

Ginny Hoover, Voluntary Service Specialist, VACO, added that they were endeavoring to get all forms 508-compliant and to communicate the minutes, attendance, and AJR form requirements to local facilities. Ms. Feeser said that it would be helpful to know which facilities are having issues, as some are doing very well, and Ms. O'Neal suggested that NAC member organizations tell the VISN Liaison Chiefs that information to lessen the burden on the Central Office. Mrs. Clark commented that while she has no direct authority over individuals in the field, she is committed to providing ongoing education, training, and communication on this issue. There is an existing database with this contact information, and Ms. Hoover added that in the enhanced VSS system, contact information will be easier to find, and the capability to email straight from the system will be built-in.

Mrs. Clark discussed other updates to the VSS system that will assist in capture hours at National Veterans Sports Programs and Special Events. Mr. Franz asked whether volunteer driving times could contribute to their hours. Mrs. Clark explained that for liability and fairness reasons, transport times to and from sites could not be counted. Moving to the impact portion of LCI, Mrs. Clark emphasized that impact is an outcome of good leadership and collaboration.

(Recess.)

(Whereupon, the meeting was resumed.)

VHA Update: Dr. David Shulkin, Under Secretary for Health, gave the update. He commended the Committee on their impressive and consistent work, and for the impact it has on the VA and the Veterans they serve. Dr. Shulkin explained that right now, VA is the most scrutinized group in American Medicine. The VA currently performs better than the private sector on mortality rates, patient safety, length of stay, and pharmacy benefits, but performs worse on patient and employee satisfaction. The VA healthcare system has many advantages it can use to ensure excellence in care, including physicians with aligned incentives, a unified electronic health record system, and a lifelong relationship with patients.

Dr. Shulkin has established five priorities:

1. Access
2. Employee engagement
3. Best Practices
4. High Performance Network
5. Restore Trust

These align with the NAC's strategic direction. Dr. Shulkin's office has studied where VA is now, where it needs to be in a year, and where it aspires to be for each priority. Asking the right questions is crucial for achieving improvement, and Dr. Shulkin illustrated this with an example of the Jefferson Memorial deterioration. He asked the Committee five questions:

1. How can Voluntary Services help accelerate the five priorities?
2. How can the General Post Fund be used to help support these priorities?
3. How can the VA reform its policies and procedures to assist us in serving Veterans better?
4. How can we recruit and retain additional volunteers at VA to help us with these priorities?
5. How can we communicate better with our volunteers to enlist their help in these priorities?

Access defines VA, both in the media and internally, and until this priority is improved the others cannot be addressed. Patient satisfaction scores relating to access are lower than the private sector and declining. Dr. Shulkin hoped that the NAC would innovate ways Voluntary Service could assist in the Access crisis.

The VA needs to make its widespread internal variation more consistent by implementing best practices. Dr. Shulkin introduced Dr. Shereef Elnahal, a White House Fellow who is leading this effort. Improving employee engagement is critical to VA turnaround efforts, and capitalizing on the intrinsic engagement employees feel for its mission will be crucial. The VA is entering a new phase of care coordination with the private sector, and will develop into a high performance network. Getting the best care for Veterans must be VA's priority, and that will often mean working preventatively and intensively with patients. Regaining the trust of Veterans and the American public will require leadership that is principle-based, transparent, and committed to sharing success stories. Dr. Shulkin thanked the Committee, congratulated them on their upcoming 70th anniversary, and asked for questions and feedback.

Mr. Eckroth emphasized the importance of providing equal access to disabled veterans; the VSOs are strategically positioned to bridge that gap, but their staffs need training. Rebecca Strauss, VAVS Partners, Inc., agreed that VA provides a high level of coordinated, observant care in the case of suicide and mental health issues, but more needs to be done with pain management. Colonel Gallina thanked Dr. Shulkin for his time and work, and stressed that for the NAC to craft its recommendations, its annual meeting must be approved. Dr. Shulkin said that they were hoping to get a budget in the next few weeks, and then could approve the meeting. Ms. Day stressed that recruiting and supporting the best possible staff and volunteers would be key to achieving the five priorities.

Dr. Shulkin explained that Saturday, November 14, will be a National Day of Access: each VA medical center will mount an effort to bring Veterans on the waitlist in. He

stressed that this was an imperfect but important response to the access crisis, and asked how the NAC member organizations could assist the medical centers. Dr. Shereef and Dr. Shulkin said that they should have materials out on the National Day of Access by the end of the week. Mrs. Clark suggested that the volunteer transportation network be made available for the event. Ms. Brown asked if the efforts to increase the numbers of volunteer doctors and nurses have been communicated to the field leaders in VA. Dr. Shulkin explained that communication should be going out soon.

VHA Communications: Todd Livick, Acting Executive Director, VHA Office of Communications and Acting NAC Chairperson, gave the presentation. He praised Dr. Shulkin's focus, no-nonsense attitude, and determination to improve the VA. He suggested having volunteers attend the upcoming VA employee town hall on December 3rd. He thanked the EC and Mrs. Clark for their hard work, and asked them what improvements could be made to VHA communication. Mr. George Braatz, Masonic Service Association of North America, wished they could be notified of major events sooner, and Mr. Livick agreed that overall communication across VA needs to be improved. Mr. Livick suggested that everyone look for lessons that will improve the next Day of Access.

Credentialing volunteers remains an issue, with wait times of up to six months not uncommon. Mr. Livick hoped that the standardized, regimental processes that Dr. Shulkin has stressed will help the volunteer experience. Mr. Braatz explained that the program managers also needed standardized training, and Mr. Kilgore suggested that Medical Center Directors would benefit as well. Attracting talented people to those positions is particularly difficult given the current media climate, but Mr. Livick hoped that the needed people would see the positions as an opportunity to serve. Pat Kranzow, American Legion Auxiliary, reminded the group that there would be privacy concerns with volunteers going through veterans' medical records for the National Day of Access. Mr. Livick agreed and said that people without the training or clearance would not be granted access to private information.

Ms. O'Neal asked whether already credentialed VA physicians would provide care at the event. Mr. Livick confirmed that and added that choice providers would also be used. Mr. Braatz asked how Veterans will be notified, and Mr. Livick said that word would be released on Friday. Ms. Brown commented that certain VA facilities were already holding Saturday clinics. Ms. Day emphasized that providing pre-packed hashtags and other social media information would help NAC member organizations. Colonel Gallina commented that if they did not receive the information about the event by Friday, their turnout efforts would be much less successful. Mr. Livick committed to getting them the information.

Mr. Kilgore asked for clarification about whether VA employees would be volunteers or mandated to be there. Ms. Hatch clarified that in her stand downs, some employees volunteer and some receive comp time; Mrs. Clark explained that under federal labor laws, VA employees cannot be asked to do their job duties without being paid. Mr. Livick said they would continue to examine the issue. Ms. Mooney asked whether VA

employees can volunteer in their off hours at VA facilities, and Mrs. Clark said that they could, as long as there was no overlap with their job duties. They cannot, however, be a Representative/Deputy Representative in the facility. Ms. Hatch stressed the importance of finding the right staffing for the event.

(Recess.)

(Whereupon, the meeting was resumed.)

Strategic Partnership Panel Discussion: Mrs. Clark conveyed that the Secretary's Office has asked the Committee to partner with three Veterans' organizations: The Mission Continues, Team Rubicon, and Team Red, White & Blue (RWB).

Alicia Down introduced herself and The Mission Continues, which empowers Veterans to continue their service through volunteering in their local community. Their programs, particularly their fellowships, give Veterans the chance to learn about their options after military service. Amanda Burke introduced herself and Team Rubicon, a Veteran-led disaster response organization. Brendan Mullaney introduced himself and Team RWB, which connects Veterans to their communities with physical and social opportunities. Mrs. Clark asked Ms. Burke to expand on their discussions with VA around pilot sites. Team Rubicon dispatches their local members to disaster areas, where they assist victims. They are examining ways to partner with VA in these situations, but as Team Rubicon is purely volunteer-based, there are some challenges to partnering. Team Rubicon, The Mission Continues and RWB are inclusive organizations that welcome Veterans and non-Veterans, and Ms. Burke explained that this helps their secondary goal of Veteran integration.

Mrs. Clark asked if they had best practices in engagement, and Ms. Downs shared the importance of informed, Veteran –to-Veteran conversations providing positive examples of VA service. The Mission Continues is also partnering with VA to connect veterans to employment resources. Ms. Burke said that, similarly, one of Team Rubicon's best practices is providing Veterans with peers who can speak about their experiences with VA, in addition to ensuring that the volunteer leaders know about VA resources, and connecting local leaders to facilities. Mr. Mullaney expanded on how the three organizations' missions provide Veterans with engagement, community, and activity, as opposed to directly providing services to them. They invite case managers to events and reach out to local VA centers to connect Veterans to established services. Ms. Downs added that, in addition to the Mission Continues fellowship program, their greatest service to Veterans is assisting with reintegration. Ms. Burke added that they train their members in emergency management, which often leads to employment opportunities.

Mr. Mullaney gave examples of ways Team RWB partners with the EC organizations and stressed that different chapters are encouraged to create local partnerships. Ms. Burke agreed that local collaboration is the best way to connect organizations. Ms. Downs hoped that communication would encourage more The Mission Continues fellows to work with the organizations on the NAC, and offered her contact information. Ms. Hatch

and Ms. O’Neal said that they hadn’t heard of the three organizations before but were excited about collaborating with them.

Mrs. Clark asked whether the three organizations would be interested in receiving good news stories coming out of VA, and Ms. Downs said they certainly would. She also shared a personal story of excellent care she received at a VA medical center. Ms. Kranzow asked if their members might be interested in sharing their stories with the Veterans’ Voices magazine. Ms. Downs expressed interest in that opportunity. Ms. Hoover commented that supporting Veterans’ physical rehabilitation programs would be a good fit for Team RWB. Mr. Franz thanked the organizations for all that they do. Mr. Mullaney, Ms. Burke, and Ms. Downs thanked the EC organizations for the services they provide to Veterans, and hoped that they could facilitate partnerships.

Strategic Partnership Update: Matt Collier, Special Assistant to the Secretary, MyVA Office of Strategic Partnerships, gave the update. He described his background and Secretary McDonald’s request that he reform the culture of strategic partnerships at the VA. Processing the number of organizations that want to partner with the VA has been difficult, and Mr. Collier has put together a triage system to vet these opportunities. Employing technology will be critical to enabling strategic partnerships. Mental health, homelessness, and unemployment, with some regional variation, are the three primary areas of need, and Mr. Collier is searching proactively to find partners that can specifically address them.

There are 50 partnerships that should be matured and announced by Veterans Day. Mr. Collier is also trying to increase positive VA news stories and implement the MyVA Strategic framework intended to help VA become more efficient. Secretary McDonald has made a strong push for change. Mr. Collier asked the Committee to tell him what is going well, what is going poorly, and for any other questions or comments.

Mr. Eckroth stressed that, in addition to technology, bringing accessibility to the VA is important. Ms. O’Neal asked whether the hundreds of local partnerships each VISN has should filter up to Mr. Collier’s office. He explained that they are looking at ways to benchmark these partnerships via a database, and that they will be asking the VISNs to contribute information. Mrs. Clark said that the VAVS database would be able to pull that information without the need to compile it from individual facilities. Major Brenda Herivel, The Salvation Army, asked whether his office would reach out to the NAC member organizations. Mr. Collier stressed that the effort should not create more work for any NAC member organization. Mr. Eckroth asked whether this effort would include recognized service organizations, and Mr. Collier confirmed that it would.

Mrs. Clark asked if every partnership needed an MOU, and Mr. Collier explained that MOUs or MOAs are not required. Mrs. Clark asked what VSOs should think about when they vet organizations that wish to partner with them. Mr. Collier suggested looking at the partnership through the eyes of a Veteran and making sure it is a mutually beneficial relationship; he also suggested that NAC member organizations call his office or Mrs. Clark. Mr. Eckroth asked if VA would provide protections to organizations in good

standing, and Mr. Collier confirmed they would, and hoped organizations would find ways through regulations keeping them from effective partnerships.

Parke Board Update: Chris Slawinski, Fleet Reserve Association/Parke Memorial Fund Board, provided the update. The Parke Board has seen an \$8,000 increase in donations through the end of September. The Board has changed its checking account to a sweep account that does not incur fees. In the past year the Parke Board has taken a slight hit to its funds, but it is still able to make scholarship commitments. The fund distributed \$52,000 dollars in scholarships. It currently has assets of \$960,889.00, a \$59,000 decrease since April. The committee is currently looking at over 30 scholarship applications, but this is a dip in applications from last year, and they are certainly hoping more apply. Ms. Hatch asked if donations could be made via credit card, and Mr. Slawinski said they could not.

(Recess.)

(Whereupon, the meeting was resumed.)

70th Annual Meeting Plans and Break Sponsorship: Ms. Brown told the EC how excited Albuquerque was to host the 70th Annual NAC Meeting, and that they will showcase Albuquerque's Native American culture. Lorna Hatch presented a breakdown of the costs for break sponsorships. As retirees and past members may be invited, the number of attendees is likely to be larger than previous years. Because the precise numbers of attendees are not known, sponsorships are in cost ranges. The EC agreed that they would keep the format of having a morning break with food and beverages, as opposed to a paying for an expensive continental breakfast.

- EC Meeting Break, 5/4 – AM Break: VAVS Partners, Inc.
- Thursday, 5/5 – AM Break: Military Order of the Purple Heart, Inc. and Blind Veterans of America, each taking half
- Thursday, 5/5 – PM Break: AMVETS
- Friday, 5/6 – AM Break: Knights of Columbus up to 400 attendees
- Friday, 5/6 – PM Break: The Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks will cover up to 500 attendees

Ms. Feeser reminded the sponsors that sponsorship checks get made out to VAVS Partners, Inc. Ms. Hatch confirmed that coffee should not be refilled in the AM breaks if it increases the cost. Ms. Feeser informed the EC that, because the government per diem rate has increased in Albuquerque this year, the room rate has increased from \$83 to \$89.

70th Anniversary Committee Planning: Tyrone Green, Program Manager, VACO VAVS, reported on the Planning Committee's work to honor the 70th anniversary. A video will showcase their years of work, a commemorative coin will be minted, and a card will be designed by Kathy Cross, of Navy Gold Star Moms. The anniversary will also be highlighted all year, starting in February. Veterans' Voices will be doing a commemorative issue. Mrs. Clark added that the VA's historian, Darlene Richardson, will do a presentation capturing the NAC and VAVS history, and involving her further in

the meeting has been discussed. A gift on behalf of the VA Secretary will be given to salute the member organizations.

Ms. Hatch suggested creating a website or email group so that attendees could see who else is coming, a list of activities for retirees who don't wish to attend workshops, and a theme that emphasizes the 70th anniversary, signified by the metal platinum. The NAC will not pay for the alternate activities, but will list them for attendees. All of this will be communicated in attendees' packets. The EC discussed ways to entice members to attend the NAC. Ms. Herivel asked whether registration would be over the phone, and Ms. Strauss said that it would also be through internet or mail.

VSS Upgrades: Ms. Hoover reported to the EC on progress made towards updating the VSS system. Developers are on board and the different components of the system are being examined. NAC member organizations feedback about report formats would be very helpful in this development stage.

Remarks by Linda Schwartz, Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning: Ms. Schwartz provided a brief biographical sketch, including her service in the Vietnam War. She shared plans to remember the 50th anniversary of Vietnam that will be added to other efforts, such as Wreaths Across America and the Secretary's announcement on Veterans Day. On March 29, 2016, all VA facilities will have some acknowledgement of Vietnam Veterans. Mrs. Clark thanked Ms. Schwartz for her work, and shared that her office's team has been the first to step up and volunteer.

(Recess.)

Wednesday, November 4, 2015 – 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Suggestions for Workshop and Plenary Sessions for the 2016 NAC Meeting: Mrs. Clark asked for suggestions about topic areas or speakers for the plenary sessions. She had already received a recommendation for a topic related to women Veterans. Mr. Braatz suggested having the VA's historian, Darlene Richardson, do a presentation. Ms. Day suggested having something about VA cemeteries. Mr. Lilley brought up asking The Mission Continues, Team Rubicon, and Team RWB to do a presentation. Ms. Shelton suggested providing more information about chaplain programs for Veterans passing away. Mr. Eckroth hoped for an update on canteen and other services.

The Human Hug project is slated to speak this year. Major Herivel shared that Colin Powell had spoken at Salvation Army events and had been excellent; Mrs. Clark would try and see if he could attend, but his calendar often fills up years in advance. Colonel Gallina suggested reaching out to Gary Sinise, who has spoken at Knights of Columbus gatherings. Mr. Franz suggested having basic Representative and Deputy Representative training at the NAC. Colonel Gallina agreed that the national training is important and should be continued, but that it needs to be tightened. Mr. Lilley asked if having a speaker from the Vet Centers on increasing volunteers there would be helpful, and Mrs. Clark agreed.

Suggested workshop topics included the use of social media and volunteer onboarding. Mrs. Clark asked whether separate tracks for volunteer chiefs, managers, and staff from the Representative and Deputy Representative would be appreciated. Mr. Eckroth thought that it would be, but Colonel Gallina disagreed and stressed it was important for local and national staff, Representative and Deputy Representative to all be on the same page. Mrs. Clark said that this warranted more discussion, but wanted to emphasize that classroom space was limited, so two completely separate tracks were not possible.

Subcommittee Reports:

Recommendations: Mr. Braatz reported on the letter from the Secretary on the recommendations approved at Albuquerque:

- Recommendation 1: The Members of the NAC recommended to VA that it either change or amend the current General Post Funds Policy to designate the General Post Fund donations as non-appropriated funds. The VA concurred with the intent of the recommendation, but held that changes were not necessary. Mrs. Clark clarified that directors currently have the authority to use the General Post Funds for things they deem necessary for the benefit of their medical facility.
- Recommendation 2: The Members of the NAC recommended that VA either change or amend the financial policy requiring any food or beverage expenditures to be approved by the Undersecretary or other SES official prior to expenditure. The VA responded that it concurs in principle, and to facilitate this change request, the program office should follow established government process and request a policy update from the Office of Financial Policy.
- Recommendation 3: The Members of the NAC recommended rescinding or amending the procedure for award ceremony food, refreshment, gifts, or mementoes. The VA concurs in principle and asks the program office to complete a policy update request.
- Recommendation 4: The NAC recommended that the Secretary of VA fully support the national volunteer recruitment and retention program in concert with the Director of the Voluntary Service Office and the Chair of the NAC. The VA concurs with and fully supports a national recruitment and retention campaign. Tasks: stand up a recruitment task force and develop guidance for temporary badging of volunteers. Mrs. Clark and Ms. O'Neal confirmed that this effort was underway.
- Recommendation 5: It is recommended that the Secretary of the VA encourage the involvement of VA Voluntary Service as a component of new employee orientation. VA concurs and further recommends that VAVS be included in the VA New Supervisor Essentials modules, and be presented to top management. Tasks: develop a presentation and present it to leadership.
- Recommendation 6: It is recommended that the VA recognize the Voluntary Service System as a high level IT priority and provide funding for enhancement and stability. VA concurs and sent two pages of tasks. Ms. Hoover explained that this was important for the continuation of upgrades to VSS.

On June 23, 2015, Mr. Braatz sent out an email asking for 2016 recommendations, but has not received any to date. Mr. Kilgore commented that he had never seen so many recommendations go forward and receive positive responses, and that the Committee's hard work enabled such success.

New Business:

EC Committee Appointments: Mrs. Clark explained that organizations with more than 150 VAVS committees nationally are automatically appointed for one year. Other service member organizations make up the balance of the 20 member EC with two-year memberships rotating on and off the EC. They keep their NAC Membership status when they rotate off the EC.

Jeff Moragne, Director, Advisory Committee Management Office, gave a presentation on rotating members on and off the EC. He thanked the EC for its service and hard work. The Secretary has stressed refreshing committee membership, and has found that advice from fresh eyes benefits everyone. Changing the culture of the VA has been a priority for the Secretary, and this policy is a part of that change. Mr. Eckroth asked what the process was for gathering membership recommendations, and Mr. Moragne said his office could offer best practices. Mrs. Clark confirmed that there are standard procedures for EC member recruitment. Mr. Braatz suggested that it would be helpful to know how long it has been since an organization has served on the EC, if ever. Ms. Day asked whether organizations or individuals were required to rotate on and off, and Mr. Moragne and Mrs. Clark clarified that, because individuals are linked to organizations, both will rotate.

Major Herivel asked if there was a period of time after which organizations could return to the EC. Mrs. Clark confirmed that returning to the EC was possible. Mr. Franz asked what would be done if organizations to replace outgoing member organizations are not found. Mrs. Clark explained that they would keep current members on to stay at 20 members. Mr. Moragne mentioned that he would like to attend the May meeting of the NAC in Albuquerque, and that he hoped they would consider inviting the Secretary and Chief of Staff. Each speaker would bring a different feeling to the event. He encouraged the committee to quickly make the invite, should they choose to do so. Mr. Moragne also encouraged the NAC to further cross-committee collaboration by inviting program offices and other advisory committees to their meetings. He also commended the Recommendations subcommittee specifically for their work, and shared that their recommendations were exactly the kind that the Secretary was looking for. Mrs. Clark commented that, because of the NAC's unique size, unlike other committees, it cannot meet without staff present to organize, and so approval of its meetings is crucial. Mr. Moragne said that he would want to explore those issues with Mrs. Clark.

Subcommittee Reports:

NAC Volunteer of the Year: Mr. Rolfes reported to the Committee that at this time no applications have been received for Volunteer of the Year. December 31st is the application deadline.

Membership: Sydney Staton, Military Order of the Purple Heart, gave the report in Mr. Del Turner's absence. Tony Burtley assisted him. The NAC has five categories of membership: service member, associate service member, donor member, associate donor member, and adjunct member. Proposed additional membership criteria currently pending VA approval are: the organization's articles of incorporation and bylaws, IRS Form 990 for the past three years, a positive rating from a nonprofit watchdog organization, a narrative of intent for joining, and the requirement that an organization must have been in existence for at least three years. The NAC also has honorary member category. The purpose of this membership category is to recognize past VAVS NAC service of those NAC member organizations no longer able to meet current minimum criteria for active membership. NAC member organizations with at least ten (10) consecutive years of NAC membership are eligible to apply for Honorary Membership. NAC Honorary Member organizations may later apply for any other NAC membership category within criteria current at the time of application. Another important Reaching out to organizations when they are becoming eligible for the NAC is important to keep up membership. Lastly, Mr. Staton reported that there are still a few organizations that do not have email addresses on file for their National Representatives and Deputy National Representatives.

Recruitment: Colonel Gallina reported a continuing downward trend of hours. Regularly scheduled hours on the rolls were down by 1,400, which is a little better than last year. Total hours dropped 750,000 over FY 2015, continuing a downward trend. Occasional hours went up 16,000, RS hours were down 266,000. The increase in occasional hours means that more people are coming in the door. A greater commitment to recruitment and retention is needed at all levels. The number of volunteers has increased somewhat in all age groups except 51-70, but the number of volunteers between 51 and 70 has dropped by 1,600. Representative/Deputy Representative training must happen between NAC meetings. AJR reports, which allow the National Representatives to see volunteer and donation hours, are essential. Learning how to attract different age groups will be crucial to maintaining volunteer numbers, as will improving the onboarding process and providing recognition for service.

Ad Hoc Partnership: Colonel Gallina reported that they have reconstituted the Ad Hoc Committee. It consists of Colonel Gallina, Christi Hillman, Mr. Lilley, and Ms. O'Neal. Colonel Gallina hoped that at least two more chiefs would join the committee. They will have a set of recommendations for the EC to present to the full NAC at the Albuquerque meeting.

NAC SOP Revisions: Ms. Kranzow reported that there were no SOP revisions to be considered.

Review of FY 2015 Data: Mrs. Clark and Ms. Hoover reviewed the data. Ms. Hoover went over documents sent out to the NAC member organizations, and asked them to let her know if they were missing any forms. Ms. Hoover has created a list of possible donor members for the NAC and will be reaching out to them. Ms. Day asked if there was a process for tracking volunteers who pass away. Ms. Hoover explained that department managers handle this issue, and most would mark their record as terminated, but the system will automatically terminate them after a year of inactivity. Ms. Hatch added that there is a comment box where the cause of their termination can be recorded. The new VSS system will mine those comments. Mr. Eckroth asked whether the new VSS system would be accessible, and Ms. Hoover confirmed that they have been addressing 508 compliance at every step of the update.

Future Annual meeting Plans: Ms. Feeser and Ms. Hatch provided a report on plans for future NAC meetings. The EC had asked them to look into San Antonio, Nashville, Tennessee and Tampa. Hotels in Nashville and San Antonio would charge a very high rate for the rooms, and so consideration was expanded to St. Louis, Indianapolis, Louisville, and Dallas.

Ms. Hatch laid out various options for each city. St. Louis was favorable, with a room rate of \$150 and a minimum food and beverage (FBM) of \$18,000. Indianapolis asked for the 2017 government rate and a \$35,000 FBM. In Louisville, the Galt House did not provide a FBM, but their room rate was \$221. The Louisville Marriott had the 2017 government rate and a \$50,000 FBM. The Seelbach Hilton in Louisville gave a room rate of \$121 and a \$30,000 FBM. In Tampa, Florida, the downtown Hilton had a room rate of \$104, and the FBM was \$55,000. The Tampa Grand Hyatt was \$169 per night, with a \$55,000 FBM. The Dallas Hilton was \$125 per night with a \$50,000 FBM. The Dallas Intercontinental was actually in the town of Addison and was \$125 per night, with a \$60,000 FBM. The Westin Dallas had a room rate of \$125 and a \$60,000 FBM. The Sheraton Dallas had a room rate of \$125, and their FBM was \$17,800, a fairly good price. The Grand Hyatt Dallas/Fort Worth was extremely expensive. The Hyatt Regency North Dallas would require additional travel, and was \$139 per night, with a FBM of \$15,000. Some hotels did not provide information.

Mr. Braatz asked what had been spent on food and beverage in the past, Ms. Feeser explained that it was around \$25,600. Ms. Feeser also said it would be possible to negotiate prices down on site visits. Mr. Moss asked how many rooms are typically rented. It has been 235 in the past, but there may be more this year due to it being the 70th Annual NAC Meeting. Ms. Feeser explained that they will examine transportation, neighborhood and amenities on site visits, and asked for a recommendation for two. Louisville, Dallas and St. Louis were discussed. The Committee found the Galt House and St. Louis particularly interesting. Colonel Gallina moved that a visit be made to visit St. Louis and Louisville. Mr. Kilgore seconded the motion. **The motion carried.**

EC Teleconference Schedule 2016: Tony Burtley explained that they were having the teleconference to ensure year-round communication with EC members. Mr. Burtley asked for recommendations for topics. Mr. Moss and Ms. Mooney thanked Mr. Burtley

for setting up the conference and expressed how much they got out of the call. Attendance was 80% in past years. The EC suggested holding the teleconference in January or February. For topics, Mr. Moss suggested an update on recommendation progress, and Mr. Burtley confirmed that was part of the plan.

Unfinished Business: There was no unfinished business.

New Business:

Vice Chair Appointment: Mr. Rolfes officially welcomed Colonel Gallina to the Vice Chairmanship.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 11:48 a.m.