

**Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS)
National Advisory Committee (NAC) Executive Committee (EC) Meeting
Thursday, October 24-25, 2013**

Call to Order: Mr. W.G. "Bill" Kilgore, AMVETS and National EC Chairperson, called the meeting to order.

Invocation: The invocation was delivered by Colonel Charles Gallina, Knights of Columbus.

Pledge of Allegiance: The pledge was led by Mr. Del Tuner, Military Order of the Purple Heart of the U.S.A., Inc.

Roll Call:

Present (P) / Absent (A)

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

VA Staff and Others Present:

On-site

Jerry Butler, Treasurer, VAVS Partners, Inc.
Ronni Miller, Chief, Voluntary Service, Durham VA Medical Center (VAMC)
Christina Allison, Voluntary Service Specialist, Durham VAMC, Durham, NC

Via Telephone

John S. Hale, NAC Chairperson and VHA Chief Communications Officer
Sabrina C. Clark, Deputy NAC Chairperson and Director, Voluntary Service Office, VA Central Office (VACO)
Lorna Hatch, Chief, Voluntary Service, VA Maine Health Care System, NAC Annual Meeting Planner
Mary Jo Munnelly, Lead Staff Assistant, VA Voluntary Service, VACO
Christine Feeser, Program Specialist, VA Voluntary Service, VACO

Additions or Revisions to Agenda: Mr. Kilgore asked if there were any additions or revisions to the agenda. Without objection, the agenda was accepted as printed.

Review of Goals & Objectives: Mr. Kilgore presented the goals and objectives of the VAVS NAC 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. Support the NAC's primary objective of advising 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 2013 Annual Meeting and to hold discussion on any appropriate advisory actions necessary.
4. Plan EC supportive actions to ensure follow-up on issues or business items from the 2013 Annual Meeting.
5. Receive an update from the James H. Parke Memorial Foundation Board concerning the Youth Scholarship program.
6. Receive an update from VAVS Partners, Inc. concerning the Annual Meeting.
7. Assess the 2013 Annual Meeting; finalize plans for the 2014 Annual Meeting, and address site selection for the 2015 Annual Meetings.
8. Review and assess submitted Recommendations intended for the 2014 Annual Meeting and prepare a report on same for all NAC National Representatives.
9. Receive reports from the: Recommendations Subcommittee, Volunteer of the

Year Nomination Subcommittee, Recruitment Subcommittee, Membership Subcommittee.

10. Update the NAC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) as deemed necessary.
11. Discuss, as a group, any area within the VAVS program in need of additional progress.

Additions or Revision to Minutes: Mr. Kilgore asked if there were additions or revisions to the minutes of the last meeting. Mr. Del Turner, Military Order of the Purple Heart, moved to accept the minutes and the motion was seconded by Ms. Patty Piening, AMVETS Auxiliary. **The motion carried.**

VAVS Program Update: Mr. Kilgore introduced Sabrina C. Clark, Director, Voluntary Service Office.

- Ms. Clark explained that the work being done by the NAC EC has never been more important than it is right now. The recent problems in Congress have led to new challenges, vulnerabilities, and opportunities. Keeping the volunteer mission at the forefront of what VAVS does and strategic decision-making will help ensure that the program will remain fiscally sound.
- Ms. Clark reviewed her own history with the VA and sought to assure the EC that she is behind them and will give them the support they need.
- Building the leadership skills of the VAVS staff, particularly Program Managers, is critical right now. It is not a matter of competence but of confidence in how individuals see themselves within the design and strategy of VAVS.
- Enhancing collaboration and outreach will be an important component in moving forward.
- The key challenge in the VAVS strategy will be to determine what can be measured and how to assess the impact of what volunteer efforts are having on the lives of Veterans. While many of the most meaningful results of volunteering cannot be measured, an improved evaluation process will keep the program viable; enhance the professionalism in the field of volunteer management; and make sure organizations know what that what they do for the program is critical and appreciated.

Discussion: Del “Bulldog” Turner, Military Order of the Purple Heart, brought up the issue of excessive hurdles in attaining PIV badges. Ms. Clark does not anticipate any lessened security protocols, particularly in the wake of the recent Washington, D.C. Navy Yard shooting by an assailant with an official badge. However, she would like to tour several VAMCs to see the current state of security processing. VAs should provide volunteers with realistic expectations and explain that it will take 30 days for an ID, informing volunteers of what assignments are available to them in the mean time. Colonel Gallina, Knights of Columbus, noted that the NAC has been addressing this issue for seven years and significant progress has been made as a result of NAC

recommendations and meetings with Central Office. The local facility's processing is the issue, not VA policy.

Mr. Kilgore expressed his desire to see issues dealt with at the most local level possible before making changes to VA policy. Ms. Clark agreed that it is preferable to handle issues at the local level.

Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Update: John S. Hale, Chief Communications Officer and NAC Chairperson, gave the NAC a sense of the current operating environment. With the advanced appropriation, the VHA was able to keep all of its operations in place during the shutdown. It has been reported that the claims processing would be slowed during the shutdown.

A field hearing was held in Pittsburgh to discuss reducing unnecessary deaths at VAMCs. Very large health care systems will always have issues, but it is VHA's responsibility to move forward and to provide the health care that Veterans deserve.

VHA Under Secretary Petzel has announced that he will be retiring once a replacement has been found. Until then, the Under Secretary's priorities are:

1. A mental health innovation work group.
2. The Patient-Aligned Care Team (PACT) which is now about 100 percent implemented. The PACT is a multi-disciplinary care team assigned to each patient in order to provide the full range of care that is needed and to coordinate that care as well as possible.
3. Expanding and improving the virtual health arena, especially the pioneering efforts in mental tele-health. My HealtheVet is about to celebrate its 10-year anniversary and has seen a significant amount of growth.
4. The use of opioids in pain management. More aggressive treatments are often needed for returning soldiers than would be necessary for the general population, but the VA is examining whether their current approach is appropriate.
5. Review other large hospital systems and share best practices on implementing patient-centered care.
6. Maintain system-wide improvement plans, such as Aspire data collection.
7. Continue combating homelessness in the Veteran population and use VA facilities to supplement residencies while offering other services to help veterans get back on their feet.
8. Incorporating complementary and alternative medicine into integrated health plans.

VHA now has the National Leadership Council that has been developing a new strategic plan over the last year. The Communications Office has been asked to assist in communicating the plan across the VA system. There are 3 top goals in the plan:

1. Provide Veterans with personalized pro-active patient-driven health care ensuring that the care is coordinated around the Veteran's own health goals. PACT and VAVS will have an important role in this. Quality and equity will need to be taken into account.
2. Achieve measurable improvements in health outcomes.
3. Align resources in order to deliver sustained value to Veterans.

Every day in every place that VAVS operates, there are good people doing good things to help Veterans. It is essential that the VA do a better job telling that story and highlighting the positive impact volunteers make. VAVS is a natural forum for engaging in wider outreach and partnerships. VHA now has an Outreach Governance Board which is attempting to improve outreach to Veterans and other stakeholders. Every Veteran needs to know they are welcome to come into the VA health system.

A campaign is under way to make sure Veterans are aware of their health choices under the new Affordable Care Act. Veterans who are enrolled in VHA health care have fulfilled the requirements of the law and are not susceptible to any tax penalties.

The VHA Strategic Plan is being rolled out. VHA will be working very actively over the next fiscal year to communicate to staff at all levels in every facility how this can impact what they do. The campaign has been named the Honoring Service, Empowering Health campaign and focuses on leveraging Veteran community leaders across the country. The Empowering Health series is a program to develop vignettes that illustrate behavior that is consistent with VA's full-blown commitment to patient-driven care.

Review of 67th NAC Annual Meeting Evaluations: Ms. Lorna Hatch, Chief, Voluntary Service, VA Maine Health Care System and NAC Annual Meeting Planner, presented evaluations from the previous NAC Annual meeting.

Overall Meeting Evaluation: 74% felt the meeting met the stated objectives, 71% felt that it was well-organized, 68% said VAVS staff made an effort to resolve problems that arose, and 99% rated the overall meeting as either excellent or very good. 96% rated the facilities either excellent or very good. 100% of the surveys received said they would attend again and encourage others to attend.

Comments received showed that attendees felt it to be a very informative conference and appreciated the opportunity to meet the chiefs and program managers. Suggestions for improvement included: make the meeting less political; keep speakers on schedule; and ask all presenters to provide handouts. Some attendees would prefer less lecturing and more breakout sessions/roundtables. Some felt that too many facility-specific anecdotes were being presented instead of general information and that some of the presentations were geared more for the benefit of staff.

Suggested topics for next year included general post funds, annual joint reviews, innovative volunteer assignments, a response from the VA Secretary's Office to the NAC's recommendations, adaptive sports and quality of life.

Parke Board Update: Ms. Judith Millick, Vice President, James H. Parke Memorial Fund Board, provided the update. Ms. Millick reported a balance of \$112,421 in its checking account and \$888,136 in total market securities. Total assets are \$1,557,000. Total donations received were \$17,720, down \$4,246 from the previous year. There is \$81,615 of outstanding scholarships. The audit and taxes were filed at a cost of \$1,500, leaving remaining funds of \$29,306. A 990 form has been filed with the IRS.

Mr. Kilgore asked Ms. Millick to request that the Parke Board consider adjusting its by-laws to pay travel expenses for scholarship as an administrative cost.

VAVS Partner's Treasurer's Report: Jerry Butler, Treasurer, VAVS Partners, Inc. discussed the financial report that had been distributed to the NAC. VAVS Partners ended the year with a balance of \$43,920 and Mr. Butler will present an expense schedule at the April meeting. It was decided to have a VAVS Partners meeting later in the day. The group's 501(c)(3) status is being evaluated by the IRS and he hopes to know soon whether VAVS Partners will get their non-profit status.

Membership Criteria/Membership Process Update: Mary Jo Munnelly, Lead Staff Assistant, VA Voluntary Service, VACO, reported that, as a result of certain NAC organizations coming under scrutiny, the Secretary asked VAVS to review their criteria for membership and try to strengthen the categories. Mr. Turner formed an ad hoc committee that presented its findings at the spring meeting. Those recommendations were approved by the NAC and sent to Central Office. The Secretary established a Public-Private Partnership (P3) work group to develop department-wide policy and regulation by which non-government organizations will be measured against when seeking to partner with VA. VAVS staff was scheduled to meet with the P3 workgroup to review the NAC proposed new membership criteria. Due to the government furlough, the meeting of VAVS and the P3 workgroup had to be postponed, but Ms. Munnelly hopes to have more to report on by the Spring NAC meeting. Until the updates are added to the SOP, the current membership guidelines will be followed.

68th Annual Meeting Plans and Break Sponsorships: Ronni Miller, Chief, Voluntary Service, Durham VAMC, discussed the plan for next year's NAC meeting at the Embassy Suites in Cary, North Carolina, April 23-25, 2014. She will look into arranging transportation for attendees that wish to tour the Durham VAMC. Ms. Hatch discussed the estimated costs for breaks; sponsorship for the meeting breaks will be identical to the previous meeting:

- 4/23 EC Meeting – Break – VAVS Partners
- 4/24 AM Break – DAV
- 4/24 PM Break – American Red Cross

- 4/25 AM Break – Knights of Columbus
- 4/25 PM Break - AMVETS

Ms. Hatch and Mr. Butler will work closely to ensure all food and beverage costs are covered. Sponsorship checks should be sent to Jerry Butler at VAVS Partners, Inc.

Suggestions for Workshop and Plenary Sessions for the 2014 NAC Meeting: Ms. Clark, reviewed suggestions for potential topics for plenary and workshop session from the spring meeting. A suggestion was made to include a workshop session about the on-boarding process for volunteers. A discussion of homelessness and suicide/crisis prevention were highlighted as being issues of great importance for the plenary session. EC Members would like to see a presentation on the wide array of volunteer opportunities and some examples of innovative assignments, especially for youth volunteering programs. It was also suggested that whoever is responsible for the Representative/Deputy Representative Training be asked to include some information about the AJR and Quarterly minutes.

Subcommittee Reports:

Recommendations: Mr. Ron Rolfes, Jr., Forty and Eight, reported that no recommendations have been received. George Braatz, Masonic Service Association of North America, suggested formulating a recommendation on the volunteer on-boarding process. At the April NAC meeting, Colonel Gallina will present a recommendation on the issues associated with expanding the VAVS regional coverage to match the VA enlarging footprint.

NAC Volunteer of the Year: Mr. Kilgore reported that a call letter was sent out in August to all members of the NAC for male and female Volunteer of the Year nominations. No nominations have been received yet and Mr. Kilgore encouraged national representatives to submit by the deadline, December 31, 2013. Mr. Kilgore emphasized that if a submittal is received that is not on organizational letterhead signed by the national representative, it will not be considered.

Recruitment: Colonel Gallina, Knights of Columbus, reported a drop in the number of volunteer hours across all age groups. The total drop in volunteer hours for FY 2013 was 1,371,388. Regularly scheduled volunteering went down by 677,844 hours and occasional volunteering by 123,006 hours. Much of this downward trend may be the result of not recording hours, but the economic factors involved and the average age of volunteers is playing a significant role. Recruitment tactics include trying to convey the career benefits of volunteering in an effort to attract a younger volunteer force, expediting the on-boarding process at a facility-by-facility basis, building relationships between national representatives and facility chiefs to improve collaboration, building organizational websites to inform and advertize the work being done, and staying on top of quarterly data reports and AJRs to keep informed of trends.

Recognition drives retention and volunteers must be made to feel appreciated and supported. It is the responsibility of the VAVS Representatives and Deputy Representatives to stay in touch with the volunteers and they should be working with the Chiefs to make meaningful assignments instead of waiting for the staff to do it.

Membership: Mr. Turner will be sending an updated membership list to VA Central Office within a week of the EC meeting. He discussed some of the challenges of many smaller organizations that lack a management system capable of reaching out effectively to their members or keeping track of their volunteers' service.

(Recess.)

(Whereupon, the meeting was resumed.)

NAC SOP Revisions: Ms. Kranzow, American Legion Auxiliary, announced that no changes are necessary at the present time.

Review of FY 2013 Data: Ms. Clark comments focused primarily on the Recruitment Subcommittee report and noted that bringing more volunteers into a facility with less than meaningful assignments, issues with on-boarding, or a lack of leadership will only work against the goals of the Voluntary Service. She also stated that she does not want to see the number of hours to tell an inaccurate story of what is happening in VAVS.

Discussion: Emil Franz, Marine Corps League, considered whether the occasional volunteer hours declined less in 2013 than the year before because RS volunteers are dissatisfied with the on-boarding process. An effort is needed to explain to volunteers why the extra steps are being performed. Ms. Clark suggested forming a task force to see how pervasive these barriers are across the VA system and what areas can be streamlined. Colonel Gallina commented that there are numerous other factors involved in the decline in RS volunteer hours. There are strategies to try to combat that at all levels of the VA, but retention and recognition is what really needs to be addressed now. Colonel Gallina will provide those recruitment strategies and tactics to Central Office.

Colonel Sue Harfoot, Salvation Army, commented that at some local facilities occasional hours are not being recorded for occasional scheduled volunteers. Ms. Clark noted that that should not be happening and stressed that an education component for VAVS staff is necessary for some of these issues.

Mr. Turner commented on the downward trend for recruitment potential that some VSOs, such as MOPH, are experiencing due to an aging membership base and the inability to recruit new volunteers from within their membership.

Unfinished Business: Mr. Kilgore discussed the change of EC membership slate. It was decided that the EC would keep its current slate at least until the April 2014 meeting and then it might be reviewed.

Future Annual Meeting Plans: Ms. Hatch presented several city and hotel options for the 2015 Annual NAC Meeting. After considering the guest and meeting room rates, food and beverage costs, and transportation options, Mr. Turner moved that the meeting be held in Albuquerque, New Mexico and Mr. Terrance “Shorty” Lyons, Military Order of the Cootie seconded. **The motion carried.** A future EC vote will be necessary for a final decision on which hotel will be selected.

New Business:

EC Committee Appointments: Mr. Franz made a motion that the 2013 EC Membership be kept the same until the next EC meeting. Mr. James Moss, Veterans of Foreign Wars, seconded. **The motion carried.**

Subcommittee Appointments: Mr. Kilgore recommended appointing Ron Rolfes, Jr., Forty and Eight, as the Chair of the Recommendations subcommittee to fill this vacancy due to Mr. Brian Bertges, formerly with The American Legion, who held this role previously. He also recommended Patty Piening, AMVETS Auxiliary, and George Braatz, Masonic Service Association of North America, as members on the subcommittee. W.G. “Bill” Kilgore, AMVETS, was recommended as Chair of the Volunteer of the Year subcommittee, with Christi Hillman, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and Judith McCombs, Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc., as members. Colonel Gallina, Knights of Columbus, was recommended to serve as Chair of the Recruitment subcommittee, with Emil Franz, Marine Corps League, and James Moss, Veterans of Foreign Wars, as members. Del Turner, Military Order of the Purple Heart, was recommended as Chair of the Membership subcommittee, with his Deputy Gary Thomas, Military Order of the Purple Heart, and Roscoe Butler, American Legion, as members. Mr. Turner made a motion to accept the recommendations and the motion was seconded by Ms. Piening. **The motion carried.**

Discussion: Mr. Butler reported the decisions of the VAVS Partners, Inc. meeting. The meal rates for the 2014 Annual NAC Meeting will be raised to \$35 and the registration fee will be left as it is. If an attendee does not pay registration fees they will not be issued meeting materials or a badge, which is how they receive entrance to meal functions.

Good of the Order: None.

The meeting adjourned.