

Arizona Veterans' Services Advisory Commission
3839 N. 3rd Street, Phoenix, AZ 85012

September 14, 2023

MINUTES

Advisory Commissioners Present

Philip Cushman, Chair (in person)
Gene Crego, Commissioner (in person)
Chris Gibbs, Commissioner (in person)
Andrew Meshel, Commissioner (virtual)
Matthew Kenney, Vice Chair (virtual)
Kathy Gallowitz, Commissioner (in person)
Michael Noble, Commissioner (virtual)
Charles Byers, Commissioner (in person)

AZ Department of Veterans' Services (ADVS)

Dana Allmond, Director (in person)
Lupita Santellano, Executive Assistant (in person)
Valen Harris, Administrative Assistant (virtual)

Guest(s)

Kirk Loving (virtual)

Call to Order – The Arizona Veterans' Services Advisory Commission (AVSAC) meeting, via Google Meets: <https://meet.google.com/jgq-vm-sc-uux>; Dial-in: (US) +1 475-222-5532 PIN: 275 244 224#
Chairman Cushman called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

Chairman Cushman led the commission in the pledge of allegiance. No welcomes/introductions were needed.

Chairman Cushman presented former Commissioner Kirk Loving with a plaque of appreciation for his service to the commission and the veteran community.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Chairman Cushman called for a motion to approve the AVSAC meeting minutes from July 13, 2023. Commissioner Gibbs motioned to accept the meeting minutes. Commissioner Byers second the motion. The commission moved to accept the meeting minutes with suggested edits to add Commissioner Gene Crego's name on the roster as absent.

Chairman Cushman called for a motion to approve the AVSAC subcommission minutes from September 8, 2023. Commissioner Gibbs motioned to approve the meeting minutes. Commissioner Byers second the motion. There being no edits or corrections, the motion was approved.

Agency Announcements and Updates

Director's Department Update

Arizona State Veteran Home-Yuma Hosted its Grand Opening on June 24, 2023

- ADVS had a packed house for the special ceremony
- Currently 30 residents are living in two out of the four 'neighborhoods' in the home
- Arizona State Veteran Home -Yuma (ASVH-Y) is now hiring nursing staff for their memory care unit – which will be the next to open
- For these positions – the home prefers candidates with prior experience working with the memory care population (dementia, Alzheimer's, etc.)...but will also provide training for those

who may not have this experience. It takes extra patience and resilience working with these types of residents because of cognitive and memory issues

- To see list of jobs open at ASVH-Yuma and ADVS visit azstatejobs.gov

ADVS partnered with the Phoenix Mercury for their Hoops for Heroes Night on July 1, 2023, to honor local women Veterans

- ADVS invited women Veterans that work for the agency and across the valley to attend the game against the Minnesota Lynx
- ADVS hosted a table on the concourse during the game
- ADVS also produced a 30-second PSA “What Does a Veteran Look Like to You?” – which showcased several women Veterans that was played on the jumbotron during halftime

Arizona State Veteran Home-Flagstaff

- Admission applications for residents is open
- Those eligible for admission include: Veterans with an other than dishonorable discharge, the spouse of a Veteran, or a Gold Star family member
- As a prerequisite, applicants must require skilled-nursing care
- For more information including an application visit our website: dvs.az.gov or call ASVH-Flagstaff’s admission hotline at (602)234-5678 and press 4

Arizona Veterans’ Memorial Cemeteries

- AVMC-Camp Navajo & AVMC-Marana are in the middle of construction projects
- Both are for expansions of their Columbarium walls
- Construction is set to be completed by the end of October at both locations
- During construction, both locations remain open to visitors during normal hours
- On September 15th, 2023 Southern Arizona Veterans’ Memorial Cemetery in Sierra Vista will inter the remains of WWII 2nd Lt. Walter Miklos
- He was killed in action on June 24th, 1944 when the B-29 superfortress he was in crashed into a rice paddy in India.

Director Allmond Accepted \$10,000 VDF donation from Crafcoc Inc.

- Crafcoc is a manufacturer Headquartered in the valley
- Each quarter, they focus on giving back and they saw a need to help care for our Veterans and searched for a well-run organization to partner with to help meet this need
- Their generous donation helps our agency to continue to be the best provider of direct services and help our community partners to provide top quality direct services to our Veterans, service members and their families.

Veteran StandDowns

- Williams held a StandDown on September 8, 2023 from 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM. They also held a Patriot Day Parade the next day on September 9, 2023 at 11:00 AM.
- Yavapai County StandDown (two day event)
1040 Whipple Street in Prescott
Friday, September 15th from 8:00 AM-5:00 PM (Job Fair on this day only; Veterans Court on this day only)
Saturday, September 16th from 8AM-12PM (Clothing & gear distribution on this day only)
- Pinal County StandDown
HOHP Veteran Transition Center
5497 W McCartney Rd in Coolidge
Saturday, October 14th from 9:00 AM-2:00 PM
- Lake Havasu City StandDown
Aquatic Center – Relics and Rods Hall
100 Park Ave
Friday, October 20th from 10:00 AM-2:00 PM

Veterans Donation Fund

- Small grant applications will re-opened on July 1, 2023
- Small grants are \$4,999 or less
- These grants fund 501(c) charitable organizations who are providing projects/programs/events for the benefit of Arizona Veterans
- How do I donate to the Veterans' Donation Fund? Donate online on the ADVS website (azdvs.gov) OR purchase an Arizona Veteran, women Veterans, or Freedom Arizona license plate. The \$17 of \$25 annual fee goes directly to the VDF
- The VDF awarded small grants to the following organizations in August of 2023:
 - American Legion Post 124 – Guadalupe Veterans -Grant funds going towards their Yoori Taewai-Day of healing (StandDown) on October 7th
 - Cochise Serving Veterans -Grant funds going toward their Veterans Assistance Program which provides eligible Veterans and their families with temporary emergency support for housing, energy and utilities, food, transportation issues and employment opportunities
 - Disabled American Veterans - Chapter 14 -IT Equipment upgrade to support equipment improvements in order to improve their ability to submit claims

Department legislative update - Our Legislative Liaison, Jessica Roza, and Assistant Deputy Director of Public & Intergovernmental Affairs, Nicole Baker, have resigned. They regularly communicated with and provided a variety of support to members of the Unified Arizona Veterans (UAV). Their roles have not been filled yet-- If anyone needs assistance from the agency, please contact HQ and we will get you taken care of.

The Arizona Legislature adjourned Sine Die on July 31st, 2023. The longest legislative session has come to a close after 204 days, the norm is 100 days. It was a session filled with bad legislation that went to the Governor's desk and was vetoed, setting a veto record, and good bills that failed to get a hearing. Overall ADVS tracked 60 different bills that directly impacted the military/veteran community or the agency. As expected, very few bills that were military/veteran related made it through the process as the focus of the session was k-12 education, water, housing, and culture war issues. The General Effective Date for the Fifty-sixth Legislature – First Regular Session is now October 30, 2023, meaning that all legislation passed during session will go into effect on October 30th. ADVS's agency bill HB2670 was signed by the Governor thanks to our Legislative Liaison, Jessica Roza and the bill sponsor, Rep. Stacey Travers. The department will now be able to inter Space Force and National Guard members at the state cemeteries.

ADVS is in the process of implementing several programs:

- Spouse of Veterans Tuition Waiver
- Tribal Connectivity Project
- Awarding \$1,000,000 to AZ tribes for tribal healing ceremonies
- Standing up the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program
- Standing up the Suicide Prevention Pilto Program
- Distributing \$3 million to Gila County for capital improvement projects for the Pleasant Valley Veterans Retreat
- Preparing for burial services for National Guard & Reserves under the Burial Equity Act effective January 1, 2024
- Continuing to fill the Rural/Tribal VBC positions

The department wants to promote being proactive in how they are helping veterans transition. Since Director Allmond's appointment, the department has developed new approaches so no veteran falls through the cracks. The department has achieved monumental goals, and developed a robust infrastructure to meet the needs of veterans. During Director Allmond's tenure she is implementing two new initiatives. First, the department will begin engaging with all veterans exiting military service. Any Veteran that calls Arizona home will be provided welcome informational packets, which will be mailed to their home of records and emails. Early engagement will facilitate navigating a complex system to prevent future crises. The department will begin working on being proactive instead of reactive. Second, ADVS will begin using data to identify areas of highest suicide risk and target interventions to specific veterans. The department is looking at purchasing a consumer data list of veterans. Currently, there are 20 zip codes where all the suicides were veterans. The department has identified veterans at the highest risk of suicide due to their social determinants of health, which may not have been met. ADVS will be able to ask for the names and information of veterans who live on a fixed income and who can potentially be in foreclosure or eviction with a history of delinquent bills and have gone through a recent divorce.

Commissioner Cushman asked where the 20 zip codes are located, Director Allmond did not have that information on hand but will have staff pull that data. Commissioner Byers asked if the older population is still up in regards to suicides. He mentioned for a while it was up by 42%. He asked if that percentage has increased or decreased. Director Allmond did not have the data on hand but can provide that information to Commissioner Byers.

Mohave County State Veteran Home Update

There is a 25 million dollar appropriation for the Mohave County State Veteran Home and it is non-lapsing. Land has to be donated. The department thought they had a lead on this matter but it did not. Commissioner Cushman asked if the home can be placed in a different part of the state. Director Allmond mentioned the home has to be built in Mohave County and requires approximately 15 acres of land.

Commissioner Cushman asked if the department could by-pass Mohave County until they find the land for the home and move on to another area of Arizona that is in need of a State Veteran Home, which may have land available. Commissioner Byers suggested we focus on opening the Flagstaff home before the department looks at opening up another State Veteran Home. Commissioner Byer mentioned the VA has a program which assists Nurses with tuition waivers. He asked if the state has a similar program. The state does have a similar discounted tuition program. There are other positions that are critical to opening the Flagstaff home such as the Social Worker and Recreational Therapist, not just nursing.

Commissioner Gibbs mentioned the state cannot compete with the market. Commissioner Crego asked what the salary is for a nurse. ADVS was able to provide an example of the salary scale based on the position and experience. Commissioner Crego asked if ADVS had spoken to the legislature regarding wages for Veteran Home staff. Director Allmond mentioned the matter has been brought to the legislature's attention. She also states the department decertified beds at the Arizona State Veteran Home in Phoenix from 200 beds to 104 beds. The department would like the rooms to be converted into single occupancy rooms by Veterans Day 2023.

Commissioner Byers states that veterans would like to be taken care of in their own home and this may also affect the nursing homes in the future since the VA is paying \$2,800 a month for in-home health care.

Old Business

Support Letter from the Commission for Director

The commission reviewed the letter from the commission to the Senate members on the Directors Nomination Hearing panel, which can be found [here](#). Commissioner Noble states he liked the letter. Commissioner Gibbs states the letter needs to be simple and to the point. The commissioners agreed to move the first paragraph down to paragraph two and make the third paragraph, the first paragraph in the letter. The second paragraph will be informational. The second to last paragraph will be deleted altogether. Commissioner Gibbs will take care of the edits as discussed by the Commission. All political references are to be removed. Chairman Cushman called for a motion to approve the support letter from the commission for Director Allmond with the discussed edits. Commissioner Crego moved to approve the letter with discussed edits. Commissioner Byers seconded the motion. There being no objections, the motion passed unanimously. The letter will be edited by Commissioner Gibbs and provided to Chairman Cushman for signature to be mailed out to the Senate members.

Strategic Policy Objective Revision – Review & Discuss the Subcommittee Report

Commissioner Gallowitz provided minutes from the previous subcommittee, which can be found [here](#). Commissioner Gallowitz gave a brief overview of the items discussed, which entailed the high level items of concern to the commission as well as looking at Governor Hobbs priorities that correlate to commissions. Commissioner Gallowitz broke down the summary of commissioner priorities from the minutes into main parts. These included promoting employment and talent development, improving accessibility to mental and physical Healthcare, ensuring access to affordable Housing and improving educational outcomes for veterans and their families. The goal is to best align these priorities with Governor Hobbs. Commissioner Gallowitz elaborated further explaining the needs of veterans might differ from the ideas the commission has presented. Commissioner Gallowitz posed the question regarding border security and if this is something that correlates with veterans issues? Commissioner Gallowitz and Director Allmond pointed out that there needs to be evidence based research to best understand how these priorities align to what is currently happening. Next, Commissioner Gallowitz posed the question of how do we gather this information. The example of gathering statistical data on high education and veterans was then discussed on who the commission needs to reach out to find data. Chair Cushman pointed out that in many instances when looking for resources to gather data on veterans issues, various state agencies would be involved in providing statistical data. Commissioner Gallowitz further elaborated on the question: is it important to ask subject matter questions on the current status of veterans? It was recommended from the Advisory commission that Director Allmond and Commissioner Gallowitz would further explore the notion of how to best gather data on the veterans community across the area. Commissioner Gallowitz motioned that once information regarding the Arizona Coalition of Military Families survey is reported that they add these findings to the strategic policy as well as any other finds Director Allmond and Commissioner Gallowitz find. The next Subcommittee meeting will be held virtually via Zoom on October 25, 2023.

Conflict of Interest Process/Updates

Commissioner Gallowitz and the commission discussed the conflict of interest process in regards to updates. The Sunset audit has yet to be finalized. It was previously discussed that the Advisory Commission would begin training on what a conflict of interest is as well as the rules of Open Meeting Law. Commissioner Gibbs suggested conflict of interest and Open Meeting Law be reviewed in July instead of January, as new members onboard in July. It was recommended that Director Allmond and Chair Cushman further discuss the process of conflict of interest forms in a one-on-one meeting.

New Business

Annual Letter to the Governor

Chairman Cushman asked the commission for ideas. He suggested the Commission resubmit their previous letter to the Governor since they did not receive any feedback. Commissioner Gallowitz moved for the Chair to take a look at the previous letter submitted to the Governor and consider if and what needs to be updated so the commission can resubmit by 1 October 2023. The commission voted unanimously to resend the previous letter to the Governor with updates the Chairman sees fit to include. Commissioner Byers suggested proposition 130 be added to the letter to the Governor. He will provide Chairman Cushman with language for the letter.

Plan Commission Meeting Locations and Speakers for Calendar Year 2024

The Advisory Commission will meet at the Arizona State Veterans Home - Tucson in March of 2024. Commissioner Andrew Meshel will help coordinate the March meeting.

The Commission will meet in Kingman, Arizona in September of 2024, and in Flagstaff, Arizona in July of 2025. Chairman Cushman states he can assist with coordinating the Kingman visit. Chairman Cushman suggested the Commission send him and the Director their speaker suggestions via email with the speaker's name, organization, email and/or phone number. Commissioner Gallowitz mentioned Col. Wanda Wright had provided a list of speakers in a previous meeting, Commissioner Gallowitz suggested the Commission use the list as a guide. The commission will take a look at the suggested speakers and will also provide the Chair with any other suggestions via email for calendar year 2024.

Commission Operations Discussion

Chairman Cushman provided the commission with an Administrative Structure for both the Commission and ADVS staff to adhere to for Advisory Commission meetings. The commission agreed to test the recommended structure. ADVS staff suggested the posting of minutes be added to the Administrative structure. (Draft copy found [here](#))

Commissioner Gibbs suggested training for Open Meeting Law and conflict of interest change to July instead of January. Commissioner Gallowitz suggested there be a review section in each one of the commission meetings but not specify the topic just yet. She also suggested the review section can align with the strategic policy objectives. Chairman Cushman suggested a subcommission be developed to help push a proclamation for Memorial Day, Patriot's Day, and Veterans' Day. Commissioner Gallowitz suggested a Public Affairs person draft the proclamations. Director Allmond suggested the Commission give input and the Public Affairs person can draft the proclamation on the Commission's behalf. Commissioner Gallowitz suggested the Director speak with the Public Information officer to determine their availability to assist in drafting the proclamation language first and to determine which large events they would like to highlight. The department will then reach out to the Commission for their suggestions on what should be included in the proclamation. Chairman Cushman asked the commissioners to send him their ideas via email on what should be included, removed, or shifted in order to finalize the administrative operations structure.

Update on Veterans Homeless Project in Phoenix

Commissioner Byers discussed an ongoing project within the Phoenix area in aiding in supporting veterans with permanent housing. This project is taking place on 1803 East Broadway Phoenix and

the scheduled date for breaking ground is on November 9th. Commissioner Byers further explained the various details of the community. Veterans will be able to get housing through HUD Voucher programs and VA to become a part of this community. Additionally, these veterans will have a resource center available to them. Commissioner Byers suggested that ADVS become a part of this project, mentioning that having a presence at their resource center would be valuable to the veterans seeking benefits. Primarily, this project seeks the support of the Arizona Department of Veterans Services as it could be a model for future projects in rural areas. Chairman Cushman suggested that the Advisory Commission attend the ground breaking of this project on November 9th, 2023. Motion to reschedule the next Advisory Commission meeting was proposed by Chairman Cushman. The Advisory Commission voted unanimously to push this meeting to attend the ground breaking ceremony. The Advisory Commission meeting on November 9, 2023, will take place from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm. Chairman Cushman wanted on record that there is a possibility of a quorum at the ground breaking of the housing project on November 9, 2023.

Seminars on the Aging Veteran & Long Term Care Health Care Options

Commissioner Byers discusses the long term health care of an aging Veterans population. He discussed how seminars are focusing on long term care and the various options that are available to veterans and their loved ones. Commissioner Byers pointed out that at these seminars, research papers are published with data and information in regards to the various challenges with Long term health care. He elaborates more on the various programs that support an ever growing veterans population. Seminars across the state are further discussing this issue, as it is becoming more prevalent with an ever growing aging veterans population.

Telehealth vs. Telemedicine for Veterans in Rural Health Areas Pilot Project - Hypertension

Commissioner Byers discussed the various aspects of telehealth and how it differs from telemedicine and how it can be utilized for veterans in rural areas. Commissioner Byers further elaborates on how this is an ongoing pilot project and discusses its applications to hypertension. Commissioner Byers points out the main difference between both telehealth and telemedicine. He points out that telemedicine focuses on real time data to allow for preventive care. Arizona State University is exploring telemedicine as a viable form of serving various populations that are rural. Exploring how telemedicine can assist with hypertension is just one part of how this form of care can be utilized. Commissioner Byers explains that telemedicine is another way to best provide health services to those veterans in rural communities.

Outreach Activities for Commission

Kathy Gallowitz Outreach:

- SW Chamber Board meeting
- 161 ARW 100 year celebration
- Promotion ceremony LTC Cheneski AZ Army National Guard
- 50 Strong Skillbridge Info session
- AZ Veterans Caucus

Mike Noble - Summer was a busy period for Veterans in the Verde Valley.

- Spent 3 days in Tucson. The Department of Arizona Marine Corps League held its summer convention in Tucson. Twenty-one detachments were in attendance. Be Connected materials were distributed.

- Traveled to Oklahoma City for a week to attend the Marine Corps League National 100th Year Anniversary Convention. All fifty states were represented plus two U.S Territories. There were a number of veteran topics presented along with programs on veteran support.
- Attended the Williams Stand Down in Williams, AZ
- Attended the 9/11 Ceremony in Camp Verde
- Participated in two Honor Guard Ceremonies
- Worked with the Marine Assisting Marine program to provide funds to two veterans for housing, utility bills, and car repairs
- He would like to emphasize his support for reprioritizing surviving spouses State support. It needs to be a high priority.

Chairman Cushman provided a copy of his report, which may be found [here](#).

For the Good of the Order

Commissioner Terms- Commissioner Gallowitz nor Commission Noble have heard back from Boards and Commissions regarding their renewals. Director Allmond will reach out to Boards and Commissions. Commissioner Gibbs is able to renew for another three years, he states he is available to do so.

Open Floor for Comments

Commissioner Gibbs asked the Director if she will be attending the stand down in November 2023. The Director states she will attend. Commissioner Gallowitz wanted to remind the Advisory Commission about the Southwest Chamber of Commerce Patriot's Ball on 23 September 2023. Anyone interested in attending can reach out to Commissioner Gallowitz.

Adjournment

Chairman Cushman called for a motion to adjourn the Arizona Veterans' Services Advisory Commission Meeting. Commissioner Gibbs motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Gallowitz second the motion. The motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 12:16 pm.

Senate President Warren Petersen
Arizona State Senate
1700 West Washington
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Dear Senate President Peterson,

Since the Arizona Senate established it in 1951, the Veterans' Advisory Commission has provided its best, most informed, duly considered, non-partisan, and apolitical advice to the Governor and the Director of the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services. This advice regards the very important and often complicated issues involving our Veterans, their families, and their survivors. In accordance with the statutes established by the Arizona Senate over the years, each of the nine Commissioners is appointed by the Governor from a list of names submitted by each veteran organization in this state holding a charter granted by Congress or recognized by the Department as a veterans' organization that is actively involved in supporting veteran affairs programs in this state and represents a region from one of the three Veteran Administration Districts within Arizona.

We are writing to you regarding a matter of grave concern to the 500,000 Veterans distributed across Arizona; that is, the confirmation of the Director of your Arizona Department of Veterans' Services which you graciously fund in the budget. The Director is responsible for the administration of the four State Veteran Homes located in Flagstaff, Phoenix, Tucson, and Yuma; the three State Veteran Cemeteries located at Camp Navajo, Marana, and Sierra Vista; the Military Family Relief Fund; and grant distributions from the Arizona Veterans Donation Fund. Perhaps most important to the Veteran community is her supervision of over 50 Veteran Benefits Counselors distributed across Arizona who provide a vital function in ensuring that Veterans receive their service connected benefits from the Veterans Administration. These benefits exceed \$399,000,000 in compensation, pension, education benefits, and medical benefits that is directly injected into the Arizona economy. Without a confirmed Director, the management of these vital functions deteriorates rapidly and creates long term leadership insecurity. We think that you agree with us that our Veterans deserve these vital services first, last, and always.

In February 2023, Governor Hobbs nominated Dana Allmond and we are still awaiting her confirmation. Dana is a West Point Graduate, a retired U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel, a third-generation combat Veteran, and an extraordinary advocate for Veterans. Dana has already served the Veterans of Arizona with distinction as the Chair of the Southern Arizona Veterans Mental Health Advocacy Council and as a member of U.S. Senator Sinema's Veterans Advisory Council. Furthermore, her participation in grass roots community service organizations such as Common Defense, Do More Together, and Rotary International demonstrate her priorities and enthusiasm to serve Veterans. Finally, her bid for Arizona State House District 17, although unsuccessful, demonstrates her courage and prepares her to work well with you and the other members of the Arizona State Legislature. A call from the Veterans community is not a change

in her routine and she is exactly the right individual we need to administer your Arizona Department of Veterans' Services for the next several years.

We understand that the current contention between the Governor and the Legislative Branch is a natural part of our political process and is a legitimate exercise of the checks and balances between our branches of government as enshrined in our Constitution. However, issues involving Veterans have traditionally been beyond politics; perhaps acknowledging that it is the Veterans who have paid that ultimate sacrifice to ensure that the blessings of liberty continue. We think that you agree with us that our Veterans should not suffer from political discourse and the longer the Director remains unconfirmed, our duty to serve them is compromised.

In conclusion, we hope that the Senate under your leadership will quickly confirm Dana and we are prepared to assist you in this matter by either meeting with you in person or testifying to the Director Nominations Committee on her behalf. Thank you very much for considering our perspectives and we look forward to the continued dialogue with you on this very urgent matter.

Very Respectfully,

Philip D. Cushman
Chairman
Veterans' Advisory Commission
Arizona Department of Veterans' Services

Copy to:

President *Pro Tempore*, Senator Thomas "T.J." Shope
Majority Leader, Senator Sonny Borrelli
Majority Whip, Senator Sine Kerr
Minority Leader, Senator Denise "Mitzi" Epstein
Assistant Minority Leader, Senator Juan Mendez
Minority Whip, Senator Eva Burch
Minority Caucus Chair, Lela Alston

Director Nominations Committee Chairman, Senator Jake Hoffman

**Working Document of
AZ Veterans' Commission Strategic Policy Update
6 Sept 2023, Kathy Gallowitz**

Questions:

1. Are these Governor priorities, Veteran issues:
 - Immigration and Border Security
 - Water and Environment
2. What are
 - Administrative vs. Policy
 - Board vs. Single Issues
3. Do we need to do more to support:
 - Nursing homes - Increase utilization, staffing, PR support?
 - Monitoring VBC - #claims, approval rating, rural, needs?
 - Identification/reporting of high risk Veteran populations?
4. Need current status of issues? How obtain?
5. What do we want to articulate positions on?

Summary of Commissioner, Governor & ADVS priorities

I. Promote Economic Growth and Workforce Development of Veterans

- Educating employers on Veteran-hiring best practices (P)
- Creating hiring preferences for able/disabled Veterans in state and local government jobs (P)
- Drawing Native Americans back to Arizona after their military service (P)
- Establishing 3% state contract set-asides for Veteran Owned Businesses (P)
- Attracting Veterans/Military Spouses to Arizona's workforce (P)
- Developing a State Veteran Employment Council (P)
- Incentivizing small business and local governments to hire Veterans ®
- Expediting military medics into civilian healthcare jobs (P)

- Property Tax and Income threshold elevation in this section. (P)
- Make twenty Tribal/Rural VBC's a budget line item. ©
- Support: (A)
 - Arizona Coalition for Military Family's *Arizona Veteran Supportive Employers (AVSE)* program
 - *DOD Skillbridge*
 - ACMF's "*AZHires Vets,*" to employ more Veterans in state government jobs Expand Affordable housing options, homelessness and financial stability of military families

II. Improve Access to Mental and Physical Healthcare

- Broad support of suicide prevention strategies, to include:
 - Support funding *Be Connected Support Line, Resources and Navigator Training* (P, DA)
 - Support DVS': (A, DA)
 - Stakeholder outreach to facilitate Veterans receiving a warm handoff to civilian life
 - Outreach to Veterans to foster awareness about direct services and benefits
 - Suicide Prevention Training Pilot Program
 - Development of a "Justice Involved" Veterans tool kit
 - Hiring VBCs to specialize in rural areas

- “Ask a Veteran: Have you or family served in Armed Force?” as an administrative recommendation to see what is feasible for agencies. (A)
- Keep needs of Veteran subgroups top of mind, including: Minority, Women, Disabled, Rural (A)
- Support DVS’ engagement with Native Americans:
 - Create rural and tribal engagement events using satellite internet capabilities
 - Deploy tribal traditional healing program
- Support these plans/programs:
 - Arizona Veteran Homeless Action Plan (A)
 - DVS Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (A, DA)
- Support Veterans Treatment Courts, to include: (A)
 - Increased funding (P?)
 - Develop more of these courts & share best practices (A)
- Support organizations that provide legal assistance to Veterans (A)
- Expanding tele-health into rural communities, including extending broadband and fostering digital literacy. (P)
- Fund *Star Behavioral Health* to educate civilian behavior health providers about military culture and learn evidence-based intervention best practices. (P)
- Support the needs of Aging Veterans to include:

- Protect and grow the cemetery trust fund with the intent to build more Veteran cemeteries across the state. (P)
- Provide memorial grants for private and municipal cemeteries. (P)
- Veterans' widows, by providing better communication and coordination of benefits. (A)
- Foster collaboration of Arizona HealthCare Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) and Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) to better support Veterans aging in rural communities. (A)

Federal issues to support: ?

- Offering Veterans paid transportation to healthcare appointments, especially rural Veterans. ?
- Simplifying credentialing of health care providers as TRICARE providers.
- Advocate for *Fisher Homes* in Phoenix, Prescott and Tucson.

III. Improve Education

- Ask for funding for:
 - Troops to Teachers ® so that more Veterans can become teachers
 - Purple Star Schools ® to foster awareness and support of military children K-12

Administrative Structure for Advisory Commission Meetings

Commission Meeting:

D-15: (Wednesday): All proposed agenda items due to the Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Director.

D-10: (Monday): All minutes, committee reports, draft resolutions, and background information due to AZDVS Staff.

D-7: (Thursday): Draft Agenda published, posted on website, and distributed electronically to Commissioners. Includes all information for Commission Board Packets (Agenda, Minutes, Committee Reports, Resolutions, Background Information, and Upcoming Commission Events)

D-3: (2nd Monday): Final Agenda published, posted on website, and distributed electronically to Commissioners. Includes all information for Commission Board Packets (Agenda, Minutes, Committee Reports, Resolutions, Background Information, and Upcoming Commission Events)

D-2: (2nd Tuesday): Commissioners submit their activity reports and RSVP how they will participate in the meeting (In person or virtual).

D-1: (2nd Wednesday): Commission Packets Printed for in-person meeting participants including the Agenda, Minutes, Committee Reports, Commissioner Activity Reports, Resolutions, Background Information, and Upcoming Commission Events for 90 Days.

D-Day (2nd Thursday): Commission Meeting

Long Terms Schedule:

January:

- Director's Report
- Legislative Update
- Commission Training: Open Meeting Law, Conflict of Interest, Ethics, Review of relevant Statutes
- Review Veterans' Benefit Coordinator Operations

March (Tucson):

- Director's Report
- Legislative Update
- Draft Governor's Message to Veterans for Memorial Day
- Review Veterans' Memorial Cemetery Operations

May:

- Director's Report
- Legislative Update
- Draft Governor's Message to Veterans for Flag Day?
- Farewell to Departing Commissioners
- Election of Chair and Vice Chair

July (Flagstaff):

- New Chair leads meeting
- Director's Report
- New Commissioners Welcomed
- Legislative Update
- Review Veterans' Courts
- Draft Governor's Message to Veterans for Patriots Day?

September:

- New Commissioners Welcomed
- Director's Report
- Legislative Update
- Draft Governor's Message to Veterans for Veterans Day?
- Review Veterans' Day Ceremonies
- Review State Veterans' Home Operations

November:

- Director's Report
- Legislative Update
- Draft Governor's Message to Veterans for Pearl Harbor Day?
- Review Military Family Relief Fund Operations
- Review Charitable Organization Grants

14 September 2023

To: Arizona Department of Veterans' Services Commission

From: Commissioner Cushman

Subject: Outreach to Veterans 14 July 2023 to 14 September 2023

The following is a summary of outreach to Veterans performed between Commission meetings. I chair several committees at my local VFW and American Legion Post to include Bylaws Committee, Naming Committee, Executive Committee, and the Quartzsite Masters Charity Desert Golf Tournament.

- Attended AZDVS Commission Meeting, Phoenix, Arizona (13 July 2023) and elected to be the next Chairman of the Commission
- Attended American Legion Post 113, Quartzsite, Arizona monthly membership meeting (15 July 2023) Provided update on Commission activities, planning efforts for new Post Sign, and process for Legion Post 113 naming.
- Assisted Veteran Jerry Hatstrup in completing his paperwork (Form R-12-401) to receive an Arizona Pioneer Hunting and Fishing License (17 July 2023)
- Attended American Legion Post 113, Quartzsite, Arizona clean up event in preparation for the installation of a new office (20 July 2023)
- Reviewed proposed amendments for VFW Post 769 Bylaws with the Commander (7 August 2023).
- Visited VFW Post 9401 and Legion Post 81 in Lake Havasu City (8 August 2023)
- Assisted Legion Post 113 Riders with their bylaws (10 August 2023)
- Attended VFW Post 769, Quartzsite, Arizona monthly membership meeting (12 August 2023) Provided update on Commission activities.
- Attended International City Managers' Association Veterans Advisory Committee meeting (15 August 2023)
- Attended Legion Post 113, Quartzsite, Arizona monthly membership (19 August 2023) Provided update on Commission activities, planning efforts for new Post Sign, and process for Legion Post 113 naming.
- Attended AZDVS Strategy Committee Meeting, (8 September 2023)
- Visited Arizona State Veterans' Home-Yuma and met with staff and several residents. (8 September 2023)
- Attended VFW Post 769, Quartzsite, Arizona monthly membership meeting (9 September 2023) Provided update on Commission activities, planning efforts for new Post Sign.
- Attended Patriots' Day Ceremonies co-hosted by VFW Post 769 and American Legion Post 113 in Quartzsite, Arizona (11 September 2023).
- Visited VFW Post 9401 Lake Havasu City (12 September 2023)

Respectfully Submitted,

Philip D. Cushman
Commissioner