

UNITED VETERANS LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OF MINNESOTA

Veterans Service Building

2nd Floor • 20 West 12th Street • St. Paul, MN 55155-2079



Army



Air Force



Marine Corps



Coast Guard



Merchant Marines



Navy

“A Consortium of Veterans, Military, and Auxiliary Organizations to exchange information and support issues relating to entitlements for Veterans, Military Retirees, the National Guard and Military Reservists, their dependents and survivors.”

UVLC Website – www.mnuvlc.org

UVLC Minutes –Wednesday, June 4, 2008

- **Call to order**
- **Invocation – Chaplain Lt Vince Hokkanen**
- **Pledge of Allegiance – Howard Wilson**
- **Recognition of visitors and guests and Commander’s of VSO’s**
MNDVA Legislative Coordinators Christine Kiel and Linda MacDonald were awarded UVLC Certificates of Appreciation for their efforts in keeping the UVLC and Veterans Organizations with weekly updates on what was happening in the MN Legislature.
- **Reports from:**
 1. - **Chairman, Jerry Kyser – Defenders of Democracy Day-John Baker USMC(Ret) the American legion, DAV, MNVVC helped sponsor a very successful day at the History Center when the Declaration of Independence was on display. MN 150th Anniversary Fly-over was a grand day. 29 aircraft honoring aviation history in Minnesota. MNDVA Leadership Conference at Ft Ripley was a great networking event. Every dollar that you give to the Ft Ripley Military Museum will be matched dollar for dollar. Military Appreciation walk and run is at 11:00AM Sunday, June 22. Register \$20 for the run,\$15 for the walk. You will receive a free ticket to the Twins game at 1PM.**
 2. **State Agencies**
MN Dept of Veteran Affairs - Mike Pugliese -Another great year for the state of MN in the legislature. Thank you to Jerry Kyser for his participation in this session. Com. Jenkins noted that there are more people on the slate for the military retirees bill to have military retirement income not taxed in MN. There will be a different strategy next year to continue the effort to get this bill passed.
MN Veterans 2008 Legislative Wrap up – Christine Kiel - Official wrap up was handed out. Bonding bill, the MN GI bill modifications is improved. Our MN GI bill is a last dollar in program. This is a lifetime benefit of \$10,000. It was increased from \$2,000 to \$3,000 per veteran. WWII medallions-turn in the name, shipping and ,money etc. A Purple Heart Hi-way, Vietnam Vets Day and Korea Armistice Day Bills became Law. Property tax relief for Disabled Vets: Revenue Cost analysis is around \$ 2 million. The retirement exemption was a \$24 million dollar budget hold. It is difficult to quantify the income that would come in to the State. Next year the state is projecting a one billion \$ deficit. It is not what we can get new, but what we can hold on to. We need a lot of support right out of the gate to find the spokes people. We need all the UVLC organizations to have a greater presents at the committee meeting to show for our Initiatives. We do not need lose anything that we have gained this year.

Chairman, Jerry Kyser reminded the UVLC that it was Gov Pawlenty who in the end of session negotiations forced the Legislative Leadership to yield to the needs of Minnesota’s Veterans. He was our Champion.

Gil Acevedo-Deputy Com. Vets Health Care -Pam Burrows senior Director for Health Care has moved from Laverne to help with health care issues. Advisory council was created by the Legislature to provide guidance. Kathryn Roberts will be the Chair Person for the council. Strategic Planning is taking place, discussing programs, value statements, future plans. Where the best location for veterans' homes in the future is a part of strategic planning. Building 9 replacement was included in the bonding.

Foundation for Friends of Mn Veterans Homes is Non – Profit being established to Facilitate the needs of the Veterans Homes. A special thanks to all of the support that the veterans home receive from all of its volunteers. There has been a nation wide search for a Director of the Minneapolis Veterans Home.

- **MN Military Affairs – COL Eric Ahlness**-There are many units August 4th there will be treated to a steak dinner for those who are going to be deployed. Bill summary: The Director of reintegration was approved. Families: employment protection of the family member. It is illegal to fire someone who is married to someone in the military. Added 6 days time off for reintegration events. Recognize excellence from employers, this includes a spouse. Businesses will be sustained. Waiving business reinstatement fees at no cost. Tuition reimbursement program. Support our troop funds. Apply for up to \$1,000 grant. \$20,000 no interest loan was honored. Dislocated worker program, State unemployment is paid to the business so that they are not unfairly impacted. Equalized taxes. Military voting, electronic use of ballots, protection of service member.
- **MN Council for Veterans (MACV)- Assistance Kathy Vitalis-MACV also got funding.** Standdown was May 12-13. 496 veterans came through using the services. This represents more than in the past 12 years. They ran shuttles from the Dorothy Day Center and the VA. There were over 40 service organizations that assisted in this event. The upcoming fundraiser. June 18 at Canterbury downs. There will be a MACV tent along with the Dept of Vet Affairs so that they can provide services for veterans who come in to the event. If you decide to come in to Canterbury for a \$10 admission Canterbury will give the entire amount to MACV. Confirmed many speakers for the event.
- **MN WWII Women Veterans Gathering –COL Julie Eszlinger Jenson (Ret)** COL Eszlinger passed around a book that she had made of the WWII Women Veterans' Gathering. She also thanked the UVLC for the volunteering and a donation for the gathering
- **MN Vietnam Veterans Charity – TWIN CITIES HONOR FLIGHT –Sat 9-13-08**
Leave 7:30 AM, from Mpls/St Paul Airport and return at 10:45 PM. We will be taking 93 WWII Veterans whom live within 35 miles of the Mpls/ St Paul Airport. There is No Cost For the WWII Veteran. They have given enough. One guardian is needed for each 2 veterans. Site: www.honorflight.org Application forms are on-line and must be submitted by Aug 15th. One application is for the veteran and the other is for the guardian. Be sure to send Jerry Kyser a copy of each @ 2674 Mackubin St, Roseville, Mn 55113. The Cost for each guardian: \$525.00

3. Federal Agencies

- **Mpls VA Hospital – Steve Kleinglass – Director**-encouraged everyone to take preventive measures to avoid the flu. Medical Center display of the main hospital and the new spinal cord injury center. The police are out at the entrance directing traffic so that the flow will be better. There are 22 construction projects going on at this time. New equipment is coming in. June 22 celebrating 20 years in the medical center. Tom Mullen, original VA director will be the principal speaker at an ecumenical service at 9:00 on the 22nd

- **VA Regional Office –Jeff Alger, Director** Julie Carie was mainly responsible for sending out the 15,000 letters for the property tax exclusion. If anyone didn't get a letter, contact the VA Regional Office. There is an extensive construction project going on at the Henry Whipple building. The VA has now moved to the front of the building. They now have 512 employees and will have 600 by the end of the year. The workload is up by 16%. This regional office handles all claims west of the Mississippi and those claims for Central and South America.
- **Tom Moore (CVSO for Ramsey Co)** The new office is now located at 50 W. Kellogg Blvd. Ramsey Co Human Resources are taking application for replacement VSOs. It is their Desire to serve the many Ramsey Co Veterans Needs.
- **St. Cloud VAMC – Barry Ball**
 Having over \$20,000,000 worth of construction. Now have a 7day/week Urgent Care available. Getting Urgent Care and Day Surgery program. Getting new boilers for the complex and the VA has approved getting a wind generator, the first one in the system. The Brainerd home based care program started and covers a 40 mile radius of Brainerd. On 29 June they will have a "Welcome Home Veterans" program. The 9 Jul UVLC (note not the first Wed) meeting will be at the St. Cloud VAMC. They have an ongoing training program for Chaplains. Dr. Susan Markstrom is the new Chief of Staff Barry thanked the V4V program for the grant for the veteran's wish program. A short discussion about the veteran receiving care for PTSD in the community based care program. It was noted that when a veteran starts to receive care from the community based care program for PTSD, they no longer have the care provider at the VA

- **Ft. Snelling Cemetery – Art Smith**

	Total interments	405	Current FYTD	2,621	Total to Date	179,186	Total Female Veterans
Caskets	198		1,319		145,907	1,322	
Cremations	198		1,074		32,734		
Columbarium	33		228		545		

The new extension project will be completed in October, which is 1 year ahead of schedule. Art thanked all who participated in the Memorial Day activities. Ft. Snelling will be the host for more training programs.

- **Jimmie Lee Coulthard – Deep Roots New Branches Initiatives – A 42 unit Senior Apt and Town homes with underground parking. It's a HUD 202 Project. One-bedroom units for low Income people over the age of 62. He is asking for a letter of support from any organization stating that it would be a good idea to have Senior housing so close to the VA Medical Center. It can't be Veteran Specific but it is targeting Veterans over 62 of low income.**

4. Federal Congressional Representatives and Senators

- **Senator Norm Coleman- Andy Davis – Both Coleman and Klobuchar voted for the Sen. Webb 21st Century GI bill. It passed and goes to the house. Home foreclosure bill still in discussion. The Senator attended a number of Memorial Day Events and gave a Bronze Star to WWII widow.**
- **Rep John Kline- Chaz Johnson – gave lists of bills they voted on**
- **Rep Jim Ramstad- Margaret Cavanaugh - No report**
- **Rep Betty McCollum- Josh Straka – Handed out reports on the bills on many Veterans issues**
- **Keith Ellison – Mike Siebenaler – Gave update and handouts on legislation**
- **Michele Bachmann – Jack Tomczak_gave updated of bills that She had co-sponsored.**

5. **Announcements** – Commander Jenkins of the Order of Purple Heart –
Welcome home veterans meeting scheduled for 16 Jun at the Vets Svc Bldg.
The theme for 13 June 2009 program is “MN Honors Veterans Welcome Home”.
The celebration will include families.

Business Meeting: Treasures Report - Balance \$5,954.55

A short discussion about the \$249.14 travel expense that was within the budget.

Unfinished Business:

The legislative report card is in progress and will be sent out when completed.

New Business:

Richard Jenkins (Order of Purple Heart) requested a letter of support for the Welcome Home project. Motion made and seconded to send the letter. Motion carried.

Motion made and seconded to support the “Deep Root New Branches Initiative “.
Motion carried.

There were 51 people in attendance-

Minutes Submitted by Jana Kyser and Rod Erickson

**Adjournment/ Next Meeting 9:30 am, Wed, July 9,2008 at the Campus of the
St Cloud VA Medical Center.**