



Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services

MEETING MINUTES
Nov. 2, 2022 1:00-2:54 PM
Governor's Residence

COUNCIL MEMBERS/DESIGNEES IN ATTENDANCE

BG (PA) Maureen H. Weigl, Chairwoman, Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs	Marc Ferraro, DMVA
Jake Derrick, Governor's Policy Office	Debbie Smith, Dept. of Health
Michael Carrington, Dept. of Corrections	Kory Auch, Office of Administration
Denise Verchimak, Dept. of Education	Terrell Martin, DCED
Kevin Atkinson, Dept. of Aging	Kurt Myers, PennDOT
Micah Snead, Member at Large	Toshua Jarrett, Member at Large
Meg Snead, Dept. of Human Services	Dan Kuba, Dept. of Labor & Industry
Tom Edwards, Fish & Boat Commission	Cheryl Cook, Dept. of Agriculture
Col (R) Ward Adams, Member at Large	Erica Nocho, Dept. of Drug & Alcohol Programs
Tim Arthun, Dept. of Banking & Securities	Ryan Dysinger, DCNR
James "Woody" Hogan, PWVC	

COUNCIL MEMBERS/DESIGNEES NOT IN ATTENDANCE

Nick Taylor, State Veterans Commission	Jeffrey Wallace, State Civil Service Commission
Jamie Dunlap, PA Council on the Arts	

OTHERS PRESENT

Tom Wolf, Governor	Brendan Auman, DCED
Ana Arcs, DHS	Janette Krolczyk, DMVA
Celeste Brucklacher, DOC	Tiffany Cleary, DMVA
Dave Cummiskey, US DOL	Greg Fry, DMVA
Rick Hamp, DMVA	Tom Cherry, DMVA
John Noll, DMVA	Joe Smolock, DMVA
Troy Edwards, DOC	Michael Woody, DMVA
Elizabeth Gavin, AOPC	Ralph Roach, L&I
Crystal Houser, L&I	Tom Snedden, Dept. of Aging
Robert Goza, U.S. SBA	Jamal Wakeem, PDE
Margo Coleman, DMVA	Tina Kotsalos, B&S
Kristi Brawley, PSU	Cam Richardson, PSU
James Fearn, DHS	Jillian Rodgers, PSU
Norm Marden, OAG	Donna Tilley Hess, DHS
Joan Nissley, DMVA	John Schwartz, Center for Combatting Elder Financial Abuse
Bill Reed, YWCA	Leora Appleby, DCED
Elizabeth Cooper, DVOP, L&I	Brian Natali, DMVA
Erin Walters, Dept. of Aging	Joann Tresco, PAARNG
Jonathan Bowman, DHS, OLTL	Dan Lynch, PA Chiefs of Police Assn.
Lana Evans, DMVA	Jennifer Spitler, DMVA

Joel Mutschler, DMVA	Danny Osten, CDVA – Cumberland County
Tom Applebach, CDVA – Lehigh County	Chelsea Ellsworth, DMVA
Lisa Kaye, CDVA – Monroe County	Greg Holler, DMVA
Sierra Bilous, DHS, OMHSAS	

<p>CALL TO ORDER, INTRODUCTIONS, AND OPENING REMARKS</p>	<p>The Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services (GAC-VS) was called to order at 1:00 PM.</p> <p>Ms. Janette Krolczyk welcomed everyone for joining the hybrid meeting and asked everyone to sign in or send an email to have their attendance counted. She led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence.</p> <p>Mr. Marc Ferraro introduced Governor Tom Wolf by thanking him for supporting the GAC-VS. Pennsylvania is only one of a few states to have a Council functioning like this for the veterans' community, and everyone should be proud of their contributions.</p> <p>Governor Wolf thanked the audience for the efforts of the Council as the needs of our veterans change, requiring assistance in many different ways throughout their lives. He also explained that working together is something that government agencies typically do not do well. Hence, the GAC-VS is a success story as a large amount of talent exists and is working to serve veterans.</p>
<p>APPROVAL OF AUG 10, 2022, MINUTES</p>	<p>No questions or corrections were noted on the draft minutes. Mr. Kory Auch motioned to approve the minutes, which Ms. Toshua Jarrett seconded, and all unanimously approved.</p>
<p>VETERANS IN PUBLIC SERVICE (ViPS)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mr. Kory Auch provided a brief history of the PA State Employee Military Service Recognition Campaign and described the value of knowing who the veteran employees are in our agencies. ▪ About 15,000 commonwealth employees have had military service, and the recognition program has been gaining strength since its inception in 2019. The campaign will recognize an estimated 1,200 employees in 2022, and new lines of effort are emerging for positive employee engagement. ▪ Mr. Auch explained that it is important for veteran employees to bond with fellow veterans. Each year, the agencies receiving veteran rosters will have a complete list of those needing to be pinned for the current year and all other current employees who have been previously pinned. This list reminds leadership to recognize those currently eligible and to include or serve the other veterans.
<p>AGING COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ms. Margo Coleman shared updates from a busy year. The four committee guest speakers included the Geisinger Healthcare System, Papa Pals, the Department of Aging's PA Share Program, and the Office

	<p>of Chief Counsel. Identified resources included the Tech Owl Program, PA Legal Assistance Program, and the Adult Protective Services Toolkit. Committee member presentations included VA Aid and Attendance and Protective Services. New networking connections included the Center for Combating Elder Financial Abuse, West Chester University, Temple University, Geisinger, and Papa Pals. The Pension Poaching Awareness Campaign is growing its contact list which included 36 entities for the 2022 toolkit deployment this past June.</p>
<p>HOMELESS COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mr. Brendan Auman stated that a goal for 2023 will be to interact with veterans with lived experience and other committees or entities to assist the committee with best practices and evidence-based decisions moving forward. ▪ Mr. Micah Snead explained that Fair Market Rent rates had jumped dramatically this year, which has caused a significant issue with housing insecurity. SSVF or HUD VASH programs may be able to go a bit higher in what they can provide for veterans who need assistance. ▪ Committee slides have hyperlinks, and everyone is encouraged to use the resources listed, such as the PA Bar Associations' legal training for veteran advocates. ▪ Rent assistance and landlord engagement remain critical components of the committee work and will be ongoing discussions. The need for shelters is increasing, and creative methods have been used, such as hotels/motels or Airbnbs, for temporary housing support. ▪ The Homeless Committee is interested in establishing a statewide interagency council on homelessness, as so much support is needed to establish housing stability to end veteran homelessness in PA. ▪ In 2022, the federal VA Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) set a goal to house 38,000 veterans this calendar year. As of the end of September, VISN 4, which serves most of PA, is 93% complete with its mission. All nine VA Medical Centers are on target, with Erie, Coatesville, Pittsburgh, and Wilkes-Barre already meeting their goals. ▪ VISN 4 has recently hired a HUD VASH geriatric specialist who will help assist individuals who are facing housing instability as they age.
<p>HEALTH PROMOTIONS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ms. Erica Nocho explained the current committee goals of promoting whole health and trauma-informed care for veterans, communicating existing needs for the veteran population, and sharing resources and information. As part of the Governor's Challenge to prevent suicide among service members, veterans, and their families, the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) shared various military and cultural competency training at no cost, provided by Psych Armor. This training will be available now through December 2025. ▪ An educational campaign is needed to communicate with healthcare workers who assist veterans in clarifying misinformation and sharing resources. ▪ Ms. Nocho explained that high turnover rates contribute to misinformation or lack of information in the field, so targeted messaging

	<p>and routine communication will be an ongoing effort. The committee will generate an infographic to assist with this communication.</p>
<p>EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mr. Jamal Wakeem spoke about the Troops to Teachers (TTT) program and shared data on the program extension through 2022 and the number of veterans who have enrolled or graduated. The grant funding comes from the Department of Defense (DOD) and goes to advertising and recruiting, not tuition costs. Pennsylvania's TTT program is one of the most successful in the U.S., so Mr. Wakeem hopes the funding will continue to assist more veterans, including financial support. ▪ Mr. Terrell Martin shared details from the PA Business One-Stop Shop, which began in 2018 to guide entrepreneurs and business owners through all stages of development. The Business Checklist provides information on business needs, and Pennsylvania is one of only a few states in the country with this functionality. For veterans, supports exist at the state, regional, and federal levels. This program collaborates between the Departments of Community and Economic Development, Labor and Industry, Revenue, State, and Agriculture, but there is room to expand the interagency collaboration further. ▪ Mr. Robert Goza briefed on the Small Business Administration's program Boots to Business (B2B). The Reboot training is a partnership with the DOD's Transition Assistance Program and is offered online and in person. Recent successes included partnerships with local universities to provide legal clinics and training. ▪ Mr. Timothy Arthun spoke about the PA Military Finance Alliance and its financial education programs. Recently, sessions occurred in McKean County, which benefited a rural community. He also shared the importance of having trusted partners in the area to communicate about an upcoming event, where veterans obtain valuable information on financial health, pension poaching/scams, and other topics. ▪ Ms. Crystal Houser stood in for the Department of Agriculture (PDA), as Deputy Secretary Cook could not make it in for the meeting at the Residence. Ms. Houser shared that PDA's veteran programs are gaining momentum, but the most significant challenge remains reaching and communicating with interested veterans. The Homegrown by Heroes page can now be reached by visiting the PA Preferred website. Lastly, the 107th Farm Show will take place between January 7-14th and will feature a new exhibit on the Farm Show's WWII connection.
<p>WOMEN VETERANS COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ms. Elizabeth Cooper began by describing the initiatives and accomplishments at SCI Muncy's Veteran Service Unit, the only female SCI-VSU. ▪ Working with the Women Veterans Alliance, Pennsylvania will generate a state-specific copy of a women's veteran magazine filled with toolkit resources and information. Service Organizations, the DMVA, and other locations will get a free copy for their offices. Sponsors will pay \$5,000 for a page in the toolkit and if businesses do not have camera-ready art,

	<p>that can be provided also. Businesses can share their business cards as an ad for \$100.00.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ms. Cooper discussed the various new women veterans peer-to-peer support groups established and mentioned the new connection to Robin's House in Butler, PA, which can house women veterans and children for two years.
<p>JUDICIARY COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mr. Michael Carrington began by sharing how well the GAC-VS works and how veteran issues touch multiple committees working to improve challenges. This collaborative environment led to the idea of a veteran symposium that will be open to the public next year. Such a symposium would assist veterans with questions on benefits and resources and could also be used to recruit for agencies with employee shortages. ▪ Mr. Carrington explained that a handful of hard-to-place inmates reentering society needed assistance near the end of their term. The connections garnered by the individuals working on the committee and outside organizations come together to assist as needed. ▪ The Judiciary Committee wanted to recognize Tammy Ferguson, Regional Deputy Secretary for the Dept. of Corrections, as the Veteran of the Quarter. Through her leadership and perseverance, veteran-programmatic employees have been hired to tend to this target population of inmates and employees.
<p>GOOD OF THE ORDER / CLOSING REMARKS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Col (Ret) Ward Adams addressed the group and reminded everyone of the purpose of the Council. Service members look to us for guidance, support, advice, help, friendship, and comradeship. Veterans count on members of the GAC-VS and the committees to help their well-being, and they deserve nothing less than our best efforts. ▪ Mr. Jake Derrick, from the Governor's Policy Office, echoed Governor Wolf's comments by saying there is great value in the commonwealth agencies and other partners working together on behalf of veterans. ▪ Chairwoman BG (PA) Maureen Weigl thanked the audience and expressed how much she has enjoyed working with all the participants. The GAC-VS is one of the five main topics she consistently discusses when she does public speaking, along with the critical relationships with the Service Organizations, relationships with the County Directors of Veteran's Affairs, public/private partnerships with non-profit organizations, and PA VETConnect. ▪ Mr. Ferraro expressed that The Adjutant General, MG Schindler, could not attend the meeting, but he sends his thanks for the GAC-VS functioning as the lead veteran advocate for the commonwealth. MG Schindler is consistently impressed with how members come together to help veterans, especially when challenging cases require coordinated efforts. On behalf of The Adjutant General, Mr. Ferro wished the group a happy Veteran's Day and safe holidays.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ms. Krolczyk reminded all participants to check the DMVA website (www.dmv.pa.gov), where the approved meeting minutes and full slide deck will be available. ▪ Ms. Krolczyk also reminded all service members, veterans, family members, and caregivers to sign up for the Veterans Registry (www.register.dmv.pa.gov). Individuals can opt-in to the DMVA digest, the weekly publication with beneficial information.
	Next Meeting: February 1, 2023, 1:00-3:00PM NCTC Classroom, Bldg. 8-63, FTIG
ADJOURNMENT	The meeting adjourned at 2:54 PM.

NEW ACTION ITEMS

#	ACTION	STATUS
1	Aging and Homeless Committees to set a collaborative meeting on aging veterans who experience housing instability.	Completed
2	Ms. Krolczyk to assist with messaging partners who can suggest veterans with "lived experience" to serve on various committees.	Pending

OLD ACTION ITEMS

#	ACTION	STATUS
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