

New Hampshire
STATE VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

BIANNUAL REPORT
MAY 1, 2017



INTRODUCTION

In accordance with RSA 115-A:8, State Veterans Advisory Committee, this report is issued to the Speaker of the House, Senate President, Governor, Executive Council, Chairs of the Veteran committees and the various veterans' organizations active in the State of New Hampshire. Two reports are issued each year on Nov 1st and May 1st.

HISTORY

RSA 115-A:8 states that a veterans' advisory committee be formed composed of two Senators appointed by the President of the Senate, two Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House and members of various veteran organizations. The members shall elect a Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Secretary from the committee membership.

On July 17, 2002, Mr. Ken Leidner, past chairman of the committee's predecessor, called the organizational meeting to order at the Legislative Office Building (LOB) in Concord, NH. The primary purpose was to elect the officers of the new State Veterans Advisory Committee. The initial veteran organization members present were the American Legion (AMLEGION), Disabled American Veterans (DAV), Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA), The Retired Officers Association (TROA) (now the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)), and the Reserve Officers Association (ROA). Elections were held in accordance with the governing RSA. The first officers elected were: Dr. Griffin Dalianis, DAV, Chairman, LCDR David Kenney, USNR, Vice - Chairman, and Mr. Edward Granger, TREA, Secretary. Since 2002 the committee has generally met on a monthly basis except for a two-month summer recess period. The committee adopted bylaws as of June 8, 2004 to govern management and operation. These bylaws were most recently updated in October of 2014.

During the 2007 Legislative session the Governor signed an amendment to RSA 115-A:8 increasing the voting membership of the SVAC from ten to fourteen veterans' organizations in the state of New Hampshire. In 2008 the authorized number of voting organizations was reached and SB 15, introduced in the 2009 session, was adopted to increase the membership to a maximum of 20 organizations (plus the two legislative members from both the Senate and from the House).

This report contains a summary of the meeting highlights, committee composition, legislative initiatives, and successes the State Veterans Advisory Committee accomplished during this reporting period.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The officers, legislative members and seventeen member organizations are shown below. Each legislative member and organization has one vote.

Chairman – David Kenney – *Reserve Officers Association of NH*

Vice Chairman – Peter Burdett – *Military Officers Association of America*

Secretary – Patti Fowler – *Military Order of the Purple Heart*

Temp Secretary – Mike Horne – *NH National Guard Association*

Chairman Emeritus – Bobby Broneske – *Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association*

Sage Emeritus – Barry Conway

Chaplain – Joseph DiChiaro Jr.

Legislative Members:

- Senator Regina Birdsell
- Senator Bob Giuda
- Representative Al Baldasaro
- Representative Robert L. Theberge

Voting Organization Members (as of the date of this report):

- 1 American Legion (AMLEGION) (*P –Mike Lopez, A – Robert Blais, A-Daniel Beliveau*)
- 2 Disabled American Veterans (DAV) (*P –Bob Guldner, A – Ron Reilly, A-Ernest Sulloway*)
- 3 Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) (*P – Shannan Brown, A – Paul Lloyd*)
- 4 Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) (*P – Raymond Goulet, Jr., A –Alan Grant*)
- 5 Military Order of Purple Heart (MOPH) (*P – Patti Fowler*)
- 6 Reserve Officers Association (ROA) (*P – CDR Dave Kenney, A – Mike Horne, A – BG John Pappas*)
- 7 Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) (*P – Peter Burdett, A – Bancroft McKittrick, A – Warren Coulter*)
- 8 Air Force Association (AFA) (*P – Steve Rogers, A – Kevin Grady*)
- 9 National Guard Association of New Hampshire (*P –Tony Gagnon, A – LTC Roy Hunter, A – Mike Horne*)
- 10 Rolling Thunder (*P – Diane Domenicis, A – John Domenicis*)
- 11 Marine Corps League (MCL) (*P – Gary A. Gahan, A – Mark Lindsley*)
- 12 Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA) (*P – MSgt Bob Heichlinger, A – Ray Hayes*)
- 13 New Hampshire Army Retiree Council (*P – Frank Musmanno, A – Mike Rice*)
- 14 Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association (*P – Ray Schwendeman*)

- 15 Catholic War Veterans (P – Denise DeBlois, A - Ernest Sulloway)
- 16 Korea War Veterans Association (P – Conrad Perreault, A – Robert Desmond, A – Richard Moushegian)
- 17 NHNG Enlisted Association (P – William Bates, A – Michael Rice, A – Jack Howley)

Committee Advisors (Non-voting):

Leadership from various state agencies routinely provide advice to the Committee, including:

- Warren M. Perry, Col., USA (Ret), *Deputy Adjutant General*
- Bobby Broneske, Director, *Office of Veterans Services*
- Peggy LaBrecque, Commandant, *NH Veterans Home*
- Barry Conway, *Sage Emeritus*
- Michael Horne, Director, *NH State Veterans Cemetery*
- Dr. William Busby, *Regional Manager Northeast Region, Vet Centers*
- Jo A. Moncher, *NH Dept of Health and Human Service, Bureau Chief, Community Based Military Programs*
- Danielle Ocker & Stella Lareau – *Manchester Veterans Medical Center*
- Al Montoya – *Veterans Medical Center, White River Jct., VT*
- Peter Burdett – *Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army*
- Howie Howe – *Help on the Homefront, VA Liaison to SVAC*

Governor’s Representatives:

Jane Hirsch, Harold Parker

Representatives of the NH Congressional Delegation

Representatives attend all meetings for information and coordination purposes. Attendees during the reporting period included the following:

Chris Scott (Senator Shaheen)
Seth Cooper (Senator Hassan)
Corey Garry, Jake Berry, Bobby Graham (Representative McLane-Kuster)
Elise Britton, (Representative Carol Shea-Porter)

REGULAR ATTENDEES DURING THE PERIOD OF THIS REPORT:

Dave Quinn, State Chairman, ESGR
Ben Kaler, VA Veterans Experience Office
Dan Marcek, VetFlix
John Reed, Martins Point Health Care
LTC Roy Hunter, NHNG Director of Service Member and Family Services
Greg D’Arbonne, Col Cross Chapter, Association of US Army
Lisa A. Aldridge, NH Transition Assistance Advisor, (NHTAA)
Larry Ward, VVA 992
Bancroft McKittrick, NH Care Coordination Program, Proforce-Inc.
Leslie Peterson, Proforce-Inc.

Al Peel, VeteransRelief.org
Pete Duffy, Director, NH Selective Service
Wilfred Gagne, VAMC Manchester
Stella Lareau, VAMC Manchester
Kelly Dobens, NH Veterans Assoc.
Bob Baker, AMVETS Commander, Post 1, Rochester
Andrea Chrisstoffels, Easter Seals Military & Vet Service
Stephanie Higgs, Easter Seals Military & Vet Services
SGM Jim Goss (Ret.)
Bill Luti, US Navy (Ret)
Adam Burritt, Red Cross Svc to Military NH/VT
Peter Biello, NH Public Radio

OTHER SPEAKERS AND GUESTS DURING THE PERIOD OF THIS REPORT:

- Governor Chris Sununu
- Senator Maggie Hassan
- Tracy Hutchins, Souhegan Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Al Brandano, The Voice Library
- Anita Wolcott, Merrimack Mortgage
- James McCormack, Vets4Energy
- Leslie Peterson, Pro-Force Care Coordination Program
- Jay Lucas, Children of Fallen Patriots
- Norm Harrison from WWAST-NH (Wounded Warrior Amputee Softball Team)
- Ben Kaler, VA Experience Project
- Tom Donovan, Dire. Of Charitable Trusts, DOJ

COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES THIS PERIOD

The committee continues to be actively involved in providing guidance and testimony on legislation put forth on behalf of veterans.

The SVAC Chairman provides a letter/email to every legislator early in each legislative session to promote awareness of SVAC activities and to encourage early engagement with the SVAC on proposed legislation.

A legislative committee, now chaired by Kevin Grady, monitors legislative activities, drafts proposed testimony, coordinates and leads SVAC testimony and activities with Legislative Committee members Diane Domenicis and Patti Fowler. Bill recommendations are made after discussions and voting involving the full SVAC.

Positions on the various bills are determined by majority vote of the full Committee. The Committee position on a bill does not prohibit any member organization from presenting their organizations position to the General Court.

During this period the SVAC took formal positions on 8 bills and followed an additional 8 bills for the 2017. The decision to follow a bill means the SVAC believes the issue in

question is is not primarily a veteran's issue but could evolve into an something that does impact veterans, The status of the bills for which SVAC supported, opposed, or followed during this session is shown in Table 1 and Table 2 below:

Table 1

Bill	Title
BILLS IN THE 2017 SESSION <u>SUPPORTED</u> BY THE SVAC	
HB 88	relative to the motor vehicle registration fees for disabled veterans
HB 221	relative to the National Guard Scholarship Fund and the New Hampshire National Guard Education Assistance Act
HB 435	relative to scholarships for members of the National Guard
HB 508	naming the New Hampshire National Guard Regional Training Institute and Barracks facility in Pembroke after Colonel Edward Cross
HB 513	authorizing the State Veterans Advisory Committee to accept gifts and donations to use for the committee's costs
HB 652	establishing a veterans track within the court system and relative to annulment of a sentence imposed by a mental health court (new title)
SB 80	relative to the implementation of the all veterans tax credit and relative to applications for recovery from the FRM victims' contribution recovery fund. (New Title)
SB 204	relative to Purple Heart number plates

Table 2

Bill	THE SVAC <u>CONSIDERED</u> THE FOLLOWING BILLS IN THE 2017 SESSION ELECTED TO FOLLOW ONLY
HB 81	establishing a committee to study gold star number plates
HB 388	relative to special number plates for veterans and armed forces members
HB 408	relative to the State Guard
HB 538	requiring occupational boards and commissions to post reciprocity information
HB 636	establishing a department of veterans affairs
SB 168	relative to increasing the amount of the optional veterans tax credit

Two new member organizations have petitioned to become voting members of SVAC. The New Hampshire Veterans Association and the Col. Cross Chapter of the Association of U.S. Army have been working to complete the process of submitting the required documentation and meeting attendance. It is anticipated to hold a vote of membership for these organizations at the May 2017 meeting.

The Committee extends appreciation to all the legislative members who sponsored, co-sponsored and supported the various veteran-related bills put forward. We recognize that in times of fiscal restraint it is not always easy to support legislation that may increase State expenditures, no matter how worthy the purpose. We thank them for their dedication and hard work in support of New Hampshire veterans.

The Committee works closely with legislative committee members to ensure initiatives on behalf of veterans are focused and relevant. It serves as a catalyst for communications in support of veterans' interests within the State of New Hampshire.

COMMITTEE COMMUNICATIONS

Mutual communications is a vital function of this committee. We interpret this function broadly. Meetings are posted on the legislative calendar. Primarily, email is used to distribute agendas, meeting minutes, and other pertinent information to ensure timely delivery to committee members and other interested parties. In addition, press releases and news items of interest are also delivered to the email distribution list as well as posted on the SVAC Facebook page. When SVAC press releases are generated they are sent to all major news outlets in NH.

Members of the Committee often participate in the public dialogue on veterans' issues, either as the representatives of their veterans' organization or as individuals. Committee member organizations further the reach of Committee communications through publication of relevant items in their own newsletters, websites and other media. The committee strives to quickly disseminate information on events and matters of interest to veterans. Matters brought to the attention of the SVAC can be distributed more expeditiously via the email and newsletters of member organizations, reaching the approximately 101,000 members of

the New Hampshire veteran community, as well as family members and various veteran outreach groups.

The Committee regularly invites speakers and visitors representing a number of organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, to present information to help the SVAC in learning about the broad spectrum of services of importance to veterans. Legislators and their constituents are invited to present their views to inform the SVAC of their perspective on a particular issue or issues.

The SVAC encourages and invites all legislators, especially prime sponsors of veteran related legislation, to more frequently participate and exchange views with the members of the SVAC in developing positions on matters important to the veterans of New Hampshire.

The SVAC has also increased communications to the VBA, both VHA's (Manchester and White River Junction) and our member organizations. The most recent by-law changes have allowed for the appointment of committee liaisons, whose primary function is to represent and communicate between the SVAC and key agencies such as the VA, VAMC the Commission on TBI&PTSD, etc. We typically have a representative from both VAMC (Manchester and White River Jct.) that present updates at every meeting. The VBA director provides an update briefing at least twice a year.

During this reporting period, the Chairman visited both VAMC in Manchester and White River Junction to tour the facilities and get a first-hand knowledge of the care provided and the challenges facing the respective Directors and their staff. In addition, we are actively participating in the Military Leadership Team and as many veteran meetings as possible. We believe it's critical to stay engaged with the various agencies and leaders in the state to obtain an accurate picture of New Hampshire's services to veterans.

In December 2016, the SVAC committee met at the NH State Veterans Home. During this meeting, an award presentation by NGANH was to the Josephson family in public recognition of Ed Josephson's public service. NGANH president, Steve Greco, thanked all those present for their service to NH veterans, saying they are making a difference. He, with the assistance of Tony Gagnon, then presented the 2016 NGANH Wentworth Achievement Award for Edward Josephson to Judy, Andy, and Mike Josephson.

Our committee meetings have also been attended and recorded by NH Public Radio as part of their veterans feature.

The committee continues to explore new options for better communications outreach. We are researching potential website development and hosting for SVAC as well as a better email delivery system to reach out to our extensive distribution list.

CONCLUSION

The SVAC is currently comprised of 17 member organizations. The committee encourages any NH Veteran Service Organization (VSO) to attend our meetings.

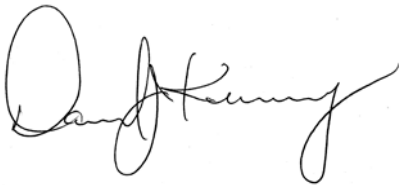
A significant number of advisors, guests and representatives from our Congressional Delegation participate in the meetings in recognition of the mutual value of shared communications and collaboration on veteran issues.

We continue to work with members of the NH House and Senate to develop our support and testimony agenda for legislative actions on behalf of veterans. This committee can and will help to develop new legislation for veterans. Legislators are encouraged to review bill language with the committee prior to or during the filing period to ensure the SVAC understands the intent of the legislation. We can help avoid unintended consequences and clarify technical jargon.

The SVAC is focused on our mission of providing a common voice for New Hampshire's veterans and their families. Our meetings provide a forum for announcing legislative or policy changes, veteran healthcare updates, and scheduled events that benefit veterans.

Questions, comments or recommendations are always welcome. The committee chairman can be contacted by calling: 603-232-4210 or email at nhsvac.chair@gmail.com.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Kenney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "K".

David J. Kenney
Chairman, NH State Veterans Advisory Committee

Approved: 02-MAY-2017



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