

New Hampshire
STATE VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT
OCTOBER 2020



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. One report is issued in October of each year.

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 monthly 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 nineteen member organizations are shown below. Each legislative member and organization have one vote. *(The assigned members below are as of 10 Sept 2019 in some cases due to elections and organizational changes, assigned members may change mid-term.)*

Chairman Paul Lloyd – VFW of NH

Vice Chairman – Diane Domenicis – Rolling Thunder

Secretary – Tony Fowler – Military Order of the Purple Heart

Treasurer – Kelly Dobens; NHVA

Chair Emeritus- Dave Kenny,

Sage Emeritus – Barry Conway

Chaplain – Joseph DiChiaro Jr.

Legislative Members:

- Senator Regina Birdsell
- Senator Bob Guida
- Representative Al Baldasaro
- Representative Patricia Klee

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

- 1 Air Force Association (AFA) (*P – Kevin Grady, A-Bob Wilson*)
- 2 Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA) (*P – Bob Heichlinger, A – Ray Hayes*)
- 3 American Legion (AMLEGION) (*P –Mike Lopez, A – Robert Blais*)
- 4 AUSA (*P – Greg d’Arbonne, A-BG(Ret.) Ed Harrington*)
- 5 Catholic War Veterans (*P – Denise DeBlois, A – Robert Guldner*)
- 6 Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association (*P- Ray Schwendeman, A-Larry Ward*)
- 7 Disabled American Veterans (DAV) (*P-Andrew Patterson A –Bob Guldner*)
- 8 Korea War Veterans Association (*P – Mike Lopez, A – Conrad Perreault*)
- 9 Marine Corps League (MCL) (*P – Shawn Carboni, A – Mark Lindsley*)
- 10 Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) (*P – Peter Burdett, A – Joe DiChiaro, A – Warren Coulter*)
- 11 Military Order of Purple Heart (MOPH) (*P — Patti Fowler), A-Tony Fowler*)
- 12 National Guard Association of New Hampshire (*P –Peter Duffy, A – Roy Hunter, A – Mike Horne*)
- 13 New Hampshire Army Retiree Council (*P – Frank Musmanno, A – Mike Rice*)

- 14 NHNG Enlisted Association (*P – Michael Lestage, A – Michael Rice, A – Jack Howley*)
- 15 NH Veterans Association (*P – Kelly Dobens, A-Mike Young, A- Doug Crooker*)
- 16 Reserve Officers Association (ROA) (*P – Dave Kenney, A – Mike Horne, A – John Pappas*)
- 17 Rolling Thunder (*P – Bruce Garry, A- Keith Hurrell, A – Diane Domenicis*)
- 18 Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) (*P – Paul Lloyd, A-Chris Peirce, A-Darwin Beeman*)
- 19 Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA-41) (*P – Raymond Goulet, Jr., A –Alan Grant, A-Patti Fowler*)

Committee Advisors (Non-voting):

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

- Warren M. Perry, Col., USA (Ret), *Deputy Adjutant General*
- Bill Gaudreau, Director, *Division of Veterans Services*
- Peggy LaBrecque, Commandant, *NH Veterans Home*
- Barry Conway, *Sage Emeritus*
- Shawn Buck, Director, *NH State Veterans Cemetery*
- Amy Cook, *Director, Division of Community Based Military Programs*
- Kevin Forrest, Corey Beem & Stella Lareau – *Manchester Veterans Medical Center*
- *Dr. Brett Rusch – VA White River Jct.*
- Peter Burdett – *Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army*
- Jim Adams – *State Veterans Council*
- John Rood – *Martins Point Health Care*

Governor’s Representative:

Jane Graham

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 Jeanne Shaheen)
Justin Troiano (Senator Maggie Hassan)
Tom Giancola (Representative Annie Kuster)
Patrick Carroll, Dalton McLaughlin (Representative Chris Pappas)

REGULAR ATTENDEES DURING THE PERIOD OF THIS REPORT:

Rep. Fred Davis
Jim Adams, State Veterans Council
Jorg Dreusicke, VFW Legislative Committee
Janet Dineen, Office of Veterans Services
Dan Marcek, VetFlix
Bill Roy, American Legion
John Reed, Martins Point Health Care
LTC Roy Hunter
Bob Baker, AMVETS Commander, Post 1, Rochester
Andrea Chrisstoffels, Easter Seals Military & Vet Service
Stephanie Higgs, Easter Seals Military & Vet Services
Tony Fowler, MOPH
Jen Hopkins, NH Community Loan Fund
Carol Hitchcock, VA White River Jct.

FEATURED SPEAKERS/GUESTS DURING THIS REPORT PERIOD:

- Dan Marcek, NH Community Engagement Board
- Kathy Costos DeCesare; Point and Tony DeCesare-Point Man Ministries NH Outposts. Nashua Ministries.
- Marie Grella, Purple Heart Community, Project Advocate.
- Tony Wynands, Coordinator for NH Army Funeral Honors
- Kathy Costos DeCesare; Point Man Ministries, NH Outposts
- Ed Mitchell, CEO, Veteran Northeast Outreach Center, Inc.
- David Fox – Census 2020 update
- BG Donald Bolduc – PTSD/TBI Awareness

COMMITTEE COMMUNICATIONS

Mutual communication 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 105,000 members of the New Hampshire veteran community, as well as family members and various veteran outreach groups. Information passed to the committee is routinely emailed to the SVAC distribution list including events of interest, job postings for veterans, job fair announcements and various items related to veterans' services in the State of New Hampshire.

The Committee regularly invites speakers and visitors representing various veteran-oriented organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, to present information to SVAC members. These presenters inform SVAC of the broad spectrum of services available to NH veterans. Legislators and their constituents are invited to present their views on current or pending legislative issues to SVAC for consideration in deciding support for legislation during each session.

The Committee 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 Committee continues to work routinely with the VA in Manchester and White River Junction and state agencies who provide services and support for the NH veteran population. In addition, we have representation on the PTSD/TBI commission and the Military Leadership Team. We remain engaged with the various agencies and leaders in the state to obtain an accurate picture of New Hampshire's services to veterans.

SVAC scheduled meetings are sent to the House and Senate clerks for posting on their respective House/Senate calendars.

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 Legislative Committee: 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 and Chairman Dave Kenney, as needed. Bill recommendations are made after discussions and voting involving the full SVAC membership.

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 14 bills and followed 3 bills that came through the complete legislative process for 2020. The decision to follow a bill means the SVAC believes the issue in question may not primarily be a veteran's issue but could evolve into something that does impact veterans or may with amendments

evolve to be considered for full support. The status of the bills for which SVAC supported and followed during this session is shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1

Bill	Title
BILLS IN THE 2019-2020 SESSION <u>SUPPORTED</u> BY THE SVAC	
HOUSE BILLS	
HB1135	naming a portion of Route 49 in honor of Specialist Mark P. Decoteau
HB1330	Proclaiming an annual observance of a day commemorating care givers of wounded veterans
HB1420	relative to the use of force at New Hampshire National Guard facilities (amended)
SENATE BILLS	
SB421	relative to educational assistance to members of the New Hampshire National Guard (amended)
SB445	relative to residency of children of members of the armed forces
SB455	prohibiting higher education institutions from discriminating on the basis of military, law enforcement, or veteran status (amended)
SB471	relative to funds for the division of Veterans services
SB472	establishing a committee to study Gold Star Family decals
SB516	relative to a property tax credit for active duty military personnel
SB726	relative to programs to aid veterans' access to employment, housing, health care, and college degrees (amended)

The Committee extends appreciation to all the legislative members who sponsored, co-sponsored and supported the various veteran-related bills during this session. 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.

Chairman Kenney and Legislative Chair, Kevin Grady, were privileged to offer direct input to Senator Morgan, key sponsor of SB726, The Veterans Bill of Rights which

endeavors to provide a broad scope of veterans service guarantees that is designed to remain codified in consideration of changes in administrations and political control of the General Court and Senate.

One of our own committee members, Ray Goulet, President of VVA Chapter 41 was recognized as this year's recipient of the Morris L McQuillen award. The award is given to a veteran by the Manchester Union Leader for exemplary volunteer services provided to NH veterans. The ceremony was held at the Union Leader facility January 17th at 2:30.

Community Partnerships: This session, SVAC continued to bridge the scope of input with regular briefings from Amy Cook, Director, Division of Community Based Military Programs, Mr. Shawn Buck, Director, NH State Veterans Cemetery, Mr. Bill Gaudreau, Director, Division of Veterans Service and Warren Perry, Deputy Adjutant General. DMAVS representatives continue to keep SVAC informed on the changes, policies, and new developments coming from each of the service divisions in the Department of Military and Veterans Services. SVAC is also proud to support the new Veteran Friendly Business Recognition program crafted by the state's Military Leadership Team.

Meeting Changes: Due to winter weather, it was decided to cancel the Dec 2019 SVAC Meeting and reconvene in January 2020. April 2020 meeting was cancelled due to COVID. May and June meetings were held on the GoToMeeting video conferencing platform.

COVID Effect: As with all state agencies, COVID policies and restrictions changed how we conducted business for the later portion of the legislative session. Given the uncertainty of the community spread of COVID, it was decided to cancel the April SVAC meeting and to look at conducting a virtual meeting for May and June to comply with the Governor's Executive Orders and guidance from the Dept. of Health. It's notable that due to early precautions, COVID cases have been kept to a low incidence and virtually no residents at the NH Veterans Home thanks to early implementation of flu protocol and preventative measures.

SVAC Treasurers Report: Kelly Dovens reports that we closed out the year with a balance of \$897.67 in our bank account.

SVAC Elections: This year the Chairman and Secretary positions were up for election. At May's virtual meeting, Chairman Kenney nominated Mr. Paul Lloyd for the position of Chairman. At the June virtual meeting, Chairman Kenney nominated Mr. Tony Fowler to succeed Patti Fowler as Secretary. After nominations were closed at the June meeting, a motion was made and passed for the current Secretary to cast a single vote for the new slate of officers. Motion to elect Paul Lloyd as Chairman and Tony Fowler as Secretary was unanimous. Chairman Kenney retrieved the SVAC laptop from Patti Fowler, performed the needed maintenance and updates, and transferred laptop to Tony Fowler for his duties as SVAC Secretary.

Summer Outing: Chairman Lloyd polled the committee in July, and it was decided to not hold a Summer Outing this year due to concerns and observe cautions in relation to COVID.\

By-Laws Change: At the February 2020 meeting, SVAC voted to change our by-laws Art III; Section 2 – Appointee criteria for member organizations relative to criminal records, member in good standing.

New Member Application: In April, an application package was received from the Patriot Resilient Leader Institute (Camp Resilience) for SVAC membership. An electronic copy of the package has been sent to all SVAC Committee members for review. A background check and appropriate vote for membership will be done at a later date.

CONCLUSION

The SVAC is currently comprised of 19 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 Committee 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: 603-496-1918 or email at nhsvac.chair@gmail.com, the committee Vice Chair email nhsvac.vicechair@gmail.com or our Secretary at svacsecretary@gmail.com

Respectfully submitted,



Paul Lloyd

Chairman, NH State Veterans Advisory Committee



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