

New Hampshire
STATE VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT
OCTOBER 2023



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 three-month summer recess period. The committee adopted bylaws as of June 8, 2004, to govern management and operation. These bylaws were most recently reviewed and updated in March of 2023.

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 twenty member organizations are shown below. Each legislative member and organization have one vote. (*The assigned members below are as of 30 Sept 2023 in some cases due to elections and organizational changes, assigned members may change mid-term.*)

Chairman Paul Lloyd – *Veterans of Foreign Wars of NH*

Vice Chairman – Diane Domenicis – *Rolling Thunder*

Secretary – Denise DeBlois– *DAV and CWV,*

Treasurer – Kelly Dobens; *NHVA*

Chair Emeritus- Dave Kenny, *ROA*

Chaplain – Armand Soucy, *Catholic War Veterans*

Legislative Members:

- Senator Regina Birdsell
- Senator Tim Lang
- Representative Linda Massimilla
- Representative Terry Roy

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

- 1 Air Force Association (AFA) (*P – Kevin Grady, A-Gavin “Mac” MacAloon*)
- 2 Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA) (*P – Richard Dolbec, A – Martha Gladu*)
- 3 American Legion (AMLEGION) (*P –Mike Lopez, A – Robert Blais, A- Bill Roy*)
- 4 AUSA (*P – Greg d’Arbonne, A-BG(Ret.) Ed Harrington*)
- 5 Catholic War Veterans (*P – Denise DeBlois, A – Robert Guldner, A- Armand Soucy*)
- 6 Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association (*P- Nate Smith*)
- 7 Disabled American Veterans (DAV) (*P- Richard “Rick” Borrazas, A – Andrew Patterson*)
- 8 Korea War Veterans Association (*P – Mike Lopez, A – Conrad Perreault*)
- 9 Marine Corps League (MCL) (*P – Shawn Carboni, A – Gary Gahan, A- Chris Peirce*)
- 10 Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) (*P – Peter Burdett, A – Laurance Miller, A – William Luti*)
- 11 Military Order of Purple Heart (MOPH) (*P – P-Tony Fowler*)
- 12 National Guard Association of New Hampshire (*P –Peter Duffy, A – Roy Hunter, A –Mike Horne, A- Steve Greco*)
- 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 Patriot Resilient Leader Institute (Camp Resilience) (*P- Kurt Webber, A- Ed Harrington, A- Steve Veinotte*)
- 17 Reserve Officers Association (ROA) (*P – Dave Kenney, A – Mike Horne, A – John Pappas*)
- 18 Rolling Thunder (*P – Bruce Garry, A- Robert “Bob” Brown, A – Diane Domenicis*)
- 19 Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) (*P – Leon Rideout, A-Denis Querrard, A-Paul Lloyd*)
- 20 Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA-41) (*P – Raymond Goulet, Jr., A –Alan Grant, A- Robert Heichlinger*)

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*
- Kim MacKay, *Commandant NH veterans Home*
- Peggy LaBrecque, *Sage Emeritus*
- Shawn Buck, Director, *NH State Veterans Cemetery*
- Brent Fraser, *Director, Division of Community Based Military Programs*
- Kevin Forrest, – *Manchester Veterans Medical Center*
- Ken Christopher- *Manchester Veterans Medical Center*
- Dr. Brett Rusch, Dr. Becky Rhoads – *VA White River Jct.*
- Jim Adams – *State Veterans Council*
- John Reed – *Martins Point Health Care*
- Brenda Pennels - *Martins Point Health Care*
- Miquel Morales, *SBA*
- Ena Lima- *VBA*

Governor’s Representative:

Trevor McAden

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)
 Molly Smith (Representative Annie Kuster)
 Patrick Carroll, Brett Lavasseur (Representative Chris Pappas)

REGULAR ATTENDEES DURING THE PERIOD OF THIS REPORT:

Rep Jim Creighton
Jorg Dreusicke, VFW Legislative Committee
Carol Hitchcock, VA White River Jct.
Jack Domenicis
Chris Pierce - President of the Veterans Coalition in Laconia/Lakes Region

FEATURED SPEAKERS/GUESTS DURING THIS REPORT PERIOD:

Richard Marsh, Author, and Webmaster of Images of New Hampshire history
Carissa Elphick - Director of Human Service Programs - Partnership for Public Health
J. Justin Moeling, LICSW - Manchester VA Suicide Prevention
David Duren Ph.D., DAC - Program Manager, Harbor Care
Henry Och - CEO, Harbor Care
David Tille - Harbor Care
Cheryl Neiverth - Clinical Project Director, Easterseals/Veterans Count
Arlene Madeiros - American Red Cross
Barbara Anderson - American Red Cross
Laura Gilman - Mobius Mobility (iBot)
Dr. Laura Laderman Garber - Holiday Cards 4 Our Military NH Challenge
Bill Sloan - Cathedral of the Pines
Jerry and Ramona Branch - Cathedral of the Pines
Cathy Kuhn (Chief Operating Officer at Easter Seals)
Ginger Munson (Easter Seals Franklin Campus Project Advisor).
Mike Vlacich, SBA New England Regional Administrator

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 95,000 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 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 8 bills and followed 1 bill that came through the complete legislative process for 2022-2023. 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/LSR	RELATIVE TO ...	SVAC POSITION	REMARKS
HB 163	relative to authorized license plate decals	Support	Signed by Governor 4 May 23
HB 189	renaming a portion of Route 140 in Gilmanton in honor of Private First Class Nicholas Cournoyer	Support	Signed by Governor 4 May 23
HB 206	including the space force in various definitions of the armed forces	Support	Signed by Governor 4 May 23
HB 229	relative to requiring an official declaration of war for the activation of the New Hampshire national guard	Oppose	Retained in Committee
HB 330	relative to the National Guard recruitment incentive program and its funding and rulemaking	Support	Signed by Governor 30 Jun 23
HB 543	relative to discrimination against veterans and price discrimination among protected classes	Follow	ITL
SB 26	relative to asbestos actions	Oppose	Re-Referred to Committee
SB 45	relative to National Guard educational benefits	Support	Signed by Governor 1 Jun 23
SB 174	relative to veterans' access to health care	Support	Signed by Governor 7 Jun 23

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.

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.

SVAC Treasurers Report: Kelly Dobens reports that we closed out the year with a balance of \$652.67 in our bank account.

SVAC Elections: This year the Vice Chairman and Treasurer positions were up for election. At May's meeting, Diane Domenicis was nominated for the position of Vice Chairman, and Kelly Dobens was nominated for Treasurer. 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.

CONCLUSION

The SVAC is currently comprised of 20 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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