

Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee Meeting(Talking Points)

Oct 14, 2025

Dear Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for affording **American Legion Palmer Ketner Post 8 (Gallup, NM)** the opportunity to present at the Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee. I am Commander Danny Unale and I appreciate the invitation and the committee's ongoing support of New Mexico's veterans and military communities.

The next items are topics that we would like to present to the committee:

1. Introduction & Mission

- a. Palmer Ketner Post 8 serves veterans, their families, and the Gallup community.
- b. Our mission: to advocate, assist, commemorate, and provide a gathering place for veterans.

2. Current Conditions & Challenges

- a. Our membership is low, many former members inactive, transferred or not renewed.
- b. We lack a dedicated building: currently using a cramped, county-provided basement office, which is not adequate for meetings, events, or veteran services.
- c. Our current operating funds are minimal (account funds).
- d. The state has allocated money for land or building purchase—so the capital resource is there but is not enough for a suitable building in our local area.
- e. We need support in bridging the “last mile” of financing, leasing, code compliance, and enabling infrastructure for a meaningful veteran post in Gallup.

3. Vision, Goals & Community Impact

- a. We want Post 8 to become a veteran hub and community anchor: meetings, veteran services, educational outreach, memorial space, youth programs (JROTC, Young Marines, etc.).
- b. A permanent building in Gallup opens possibilities for community events, veteran counselling, veteran gathering events, and educational programming.

- c. A strong, visible post helps recruit new members, raises veteran visibility, and provides direct support and advocacy.

4. Legislative & Committee Support We Respectfully Request

Here are specific asks and proposals where the legislature's backing or policy changes would accelerate our work:

a. Matching or Bridge Grants

- i. A state matching fund or grant (e.g. 1:1 or 2:1) for veteran organizations to make up shortfalls in capital or construction costs.
 - 1. Helps us move from "good enough" to sustainable quality facility without overburdening Post resources.

b. Tax Incentives/Abatements

- i. Property tax relief or abatement for American Legion posts for a period (5–10 years) when building new or restoring facilities.
 - 1. Reduces annual burdens and frees up funds for programming and maintenance.

c. Veterans' Real Property Registry & Preference

- i. A state registry/policy that flags veteran-owned or veteran-serving vacant properties/land and gives them priority or discounted rates when state/local governments dispose of property.
 - 1. Helps us find suitable parcels more quickly and increases access to existing buildings.

d. Capital Access Programs

- i. Low-interest or forgivable loans, or a revolving fund specifically for veteran post facility development.
 - 1. Bridges gaps, accelerates progress, and reduces project risk.

e. Statewide Coordination & Outreach

- i. Partner with the Office of Veterans' Affairs or State Veterans' Service Officers to expose Post 8 as a regional resource hub; facilitate grants and interagency cooperation.
 - 1. Leverages existing state infrastructure and avoids duplication of effort.

f. Support for Operating & Programming Costs

- i. In addition to capital, assistance (grants or direct funding) for programming (educational, outreach, veteran services) and operations in early years.

- 1. Helps us survive the critical early years of a new facility.

5. Closing & Gratitude

- a. Post 8, and I deeply appreciate the state's earlier allocation toward land or building—the gesture demonstrates a commitment to Gallup's veterans. As we stand on the precipice of rebuilding, we ask this committee to help carry us across the finish line.
- b. With your support on one or more of these proposals, we can restore Post 8 to not only a functioning veteran home but a beacon of service, fellowship, and community in McKinley County.
- c. Again, thank you for your time, for including us, and for your dedication to veterans in New Mexico. We look forward to your questions and suggestions during the Q&A portion.

Respectfully,

Danny Unale, Commander

Palmer Ketner Post 8, American Legion, Gallup, NM