

**MINUTES
of the
SECOND MEETING
of the
MILITARY AND VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**June 26, 2026
Clovis Community College
Town Hall
417 Schepps Boulevard
Clovis**

The second meeting of the Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee was called to order by Senator Harold Pope, chair, on June 26, 2026 at 11:08 a.m. at Clovis Community College in Clovis.

Present

Sen. Harold Pope, Chair
Rep. Debra M. Sariñana, Vice Chair
Sen. Jay C. Block
Rep. Art De La Cruz
Sen. Shannon D. Pinto

Absent

Rep. D. Wonda Johnson
Rep. Luis M. Terrazas
Sen. Rex Wilson

Advisory Members

Rep. Angelita Mejia
Rep. Andrea Reeb

Sen. Pat Boone
Sen. Craig W. Brandt
Rep. Catherine J. Cullen
Rep. Joy Garratt
Rep. Stefani Lord
Rep. Alan T. Martinez
Sen. Gabriel Ramos

Guest Legislators

Sen. Pat Woods
Rep. Martin R. Zamora

Staff

Erin Bond, Researcher, Legislative Council Service (LCS)
Domenica Nieto, Research Assistant, LCS

Guests

The guest list in the meeting file.

Handouts

Handouts and other written testimony are in the meeting file and posted on the

legislature's website.

References to Webcast

The time reference noted next to each agenda item in this document is cross-referenced to the webcast of the committee meeting, which can be found at www.nmlegis.gov, under the "Webcast" tab. The presentations made and committee discussions for agenda items can be found on the recorded webcast for this meeting.

Friday, June 26

Welcome and Introductions (11:08 a.m.)

Senator Pope welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked committee members and staff to introduce themselves.

Welcome and Update on Clovis Community College (11:14 a.m.)

Jonathan Fuentes, Ph.D., president, Clovis Community College, provided an overview of the programs offered by Clovis Community College and Clovis Community College's partnership with Cannon Air Force Base (CAFB). He described how Clovis Community College and CAFB are expanding certain initiatives, such as the United States Department of Defense STARBASE program for elementary school students in the Clovis area. Additionally, Dr. Fuentes discussed the community college's purchase of the Gentry Center for Workforce Education for additional career and technical education programs. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=MVAC&Date=6/26/2026&ItemNumber=1>.

CAFB Mission Briefing (11:43 a.m.)

Colonel Brett Cassidy, commander, 27th Special Operations Wing, CAFB; George Jones, executive director, 27th Special Operations Wing, CAFB; and Chief Master Sergeant Thomas J. Gunnell, command chief, 27th Special Operations Wing, CAFB, expanded on the STARBASE program, stating the goal of having fifth graders from the eight districts around CAFB participate in 25 hours of science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics education. Colonel Cassidy discussed impacts of the enactment of interstate licensure compacts in New Mexico and changes to medical malpractice laws on CAFB personnel and their families. The presenters also discussed recruitment challenges. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=MVAC&Date=6/26/2026&ItemNumber=2>.

CAFB and the Community (12:45 p.m.)

Mike Davidson, mayor, City of Portales; Sid Strebeck, chair, Committee of 50; and Brad Bender, chair, Curry County Board of County Commissioners, discussed the work and

community partnerships between CAFB and eastern New Mexico communities. They brought forth some areas of concern in the communities, including affordable off-base housing, transportation infrastructure and long-term water resources planning. Mayor Davidson discussed veterans cemeteries in the area, stating that there are many veteran gravesites without headstones due to qualification issues, specifically at American Legion Post 31, mentioning that American Legion Post 31 would like to purchase flag holders. He noted that the Portales cemetery would like to include a section for veterans.

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) Cleanup Progress Report (1:27 p.m.)

J.D. Nance, chief, Hazardous Waste Bureau, Resource Protection Division, Department of Environment, provided an update on PFAS cleanup, mentioning ongoing litigation and discussions with local landowners. He spoke about an agreement that would allow the Department of Environment to lead the off-site cleanup while the Air Force would handle the on-site cleanup.

Approval of Minutes (2:13 p.m.)

On a motion made, seconded and approved, the committee unanimously adopted the minutes of the May 15, 2026 meeting.

New Mexico Military Institute (NMMI) Update (2:13 p.m.)

Brigadier General Voris McBurnette, president and superintendent, NMMI, provided an update on the NMMI, highlighting partnerships at the New Mexico National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Academy, community engagement, various achievements and record-breaking donor support and fundraising. He also focused on the struggles that the NMMI faces regarding enrollment, the campus's water system and projects needed to maintain the campus's aging infrastructure. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=MVAC&Date=6/26/2026&ItemNumber=5>.

Military Base Planning Commission Legislative Priorities (2:46 p.m.)

Megan A. Cornett, executive director, Office of Military Base Planning and Support, and Raymond Mondragon, member, Military Base Planning Commission, provided an overview of the Military Base Planning Commission's priorities for the 2027 legislative session. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=MVAC&Date=6/26/2026&ItemNumber=6>.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 3:04 p.m.

