

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

**August 31, 2016
Richard Barr Room
Central New Mexico Community College
Albuquerque**

The third meeting of the Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee was called to order by Representative Bob Wooley, co-chair, on August 31, 2016 at 9:00 a.m. in the Richard Barr Room at Central New Mexico Community College (CNM) in Albuquerque.

Present

Sen. Richard C. Martinez, Co-Chair
Rep. Bob Wooley, Co-Chair
Rep. Eliseo Lee Alcon
Sen. Craig W. Brandt
Sen. William F. Burt
Rep. Randal S. Crowder
Rep. George Dodge, Jr.

Absent

Sen. Daniel A. Ivey-Soto

Advisory Members

Rep. David E. Adkins
Rep. Jim Dines
Sen. Michael Padilla
Rep. Jim R. Trujillo
Rep. John L. Zimmerman

Rep. Cathrynn N. Brown
Sen. Carlos R. Cisneros
Rep. Rick Little
Sen. William H. Payne
Sen. John Pinto
Sen. William E. Sharer

Staff

Jeret Fleetwood, Researcher, Legislative Council Service (LCS)
Anna Martin, Intern, LCS

Guests

The guest list is in the meeting file.

Handouts

Copies of all handouts and other written testimony are in the meeting file.

Wednesday, August 31

Welcome

Dr. Phillip A. Bustos, vice president for student services, CNM, welcomed the committee on behalf of CNM President Katherine W. Winograd. Dr. Bustos thanked the committee members for their service in the legislature. He briefly described the CNM student body, explaining that the school has more than 30,000 students enrolled at seven different campuses.

New Mexico National Guard Update

Colonel Ken Nava, chief of staff, New Mexico National Guard; Colonel Mike Lee, commander, Civil Air Patrol; and Major Tom Griego, New Mexico State Defense Force (NMSDF), gave an update on the New Mexico National Guard's various activities and programs.

Colonel Nava gave an update on the guard's current efforts and numbers, explaining that there are currently 126 soldiers deployed with the guard who are set to return home in October. Colonel Nava provided a brief overview of the guard's current counterdrug efforts, explaining that the guard has seized \$50 million in illegal drugs as part of a recent drug task force effort. The guard is also focused on re-stationing its workforce with the impending closure of a guard transportation company in fiscal year 2017. While the guard promised to re-station workers so they would not lose their jobs due to this, the guard is generally concerned with the state and national trends of downsizing the military. Lastly, Colonel Nava debriefed the committee on recent policy changes to include females in combat arms as well as efforts to accommodate transgender soldiers.

Colonel Lee continued the guard's presentation with an overview of the federally mandated Civil Air Patrol program, outlining the program's emergency services and annual hours flown, current aerospace education efforts and various cadet programs. The Civil Air Patrol also hosts New Mexico's Group 800 School Enrichment Program, an aerospace school elective class offered to New Mexico middle school students. The Civil Air Patrol celebrates its seventy-fifth anniversary this year.

Major Griego continued with an overview of the NMSDF, a program authorized by both the federal and New Mexico constitutions and that exists, in part, to supplement the New Mexico National Guard's efforts, as well as to carry out its own mission of aiding local law enforcement agencies, communities and veteran organizations. Due to a decision from the governor to temporarily halt NMSDF operations several years ago, the program now seeks to rebuild and enhance the NMSDF. To do this, the NMSDF seeks to amend statutes to add discretionary language that allows the governor the authority to utilize the personnel and assets of the NMSDF at his or her discretion. Secondly, the NMSDF proposes to amend existing statutory language to increase the maximum age limit from 64 to 75, as the NMSDF believes the organization will benefit from opening the program to experienced participants over age 64.

Colonel Nava wrapped up the presentation with an overview of the New Mexico Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (NM ESGR) organization, explaining that the NM ESGR has 120 volunteers and six paid employees. However, due to a shift at the national level, it will be losing two-thirds of its paid staff in November 2016. Colonel Nava also reviewed the NM ESGR budget, outlined its employment and volunteer statistics and reported on the NM ESGR's recent awards and accomplishments. Theresa Martinez, director, New Mexico State Programs, Department of Military Affairs, concluded the New Mexico National Guard's presentation by thanking the legislators for their service and support.

On questioning, Colonel Nava, Colonel Lee, Major Griego and committee members noted that:

(1) with the 2017 closure of two northern New Mexico transportation companies, the New Mexico National Guard will be moving and rehiring all 168 employees who worked in those locations;

(2) the New Mexico Group 800 School Enrichment Program is currently operating in middle and high schools across the state, including in Albuquerque, Belen, Bernalillo, Espanola, Las Cruces and a few other locations, with plans to expand;

(3) the NMSDF currently has 25 volunteers, with a goal of expanding to 250 volunteers, including increased numbers of information technology (IT) and medical volunteers;

(4) due to the fact that the NMSDF is mostly made up of volunteers, it operates on an annual budget of \$8,000, mostly to pay for uniforms and equipment; and

(5) Colonel Nava and the New Mexico National Guard will support the National Guard monument dedication event to be held at the Glorieta Pass Battlefield, Pecos National Historic Park, in Santa Fe County.

Public Comment

Bob Anderson, Vietnam veteran, expressed concern regarding increased state spending on military programs such as the NMSDF. He urged the committee to consider creating a "Department of Peace" rather than focusing on military efforts.

Veterans' Services Department (VSD) Update

Brigadier General Jack R. Fox, secretary, VSD; Mitchell Lawrence, healthcare coordination program manager, VSD; and Tom Wagner, manager, VSD State Cemetery Program, gave an update on the department's efforts to address four priority issues: coordination with the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA); veterans' transportation; female veterans; and state veterans' cemeteries.

The VSD is currently working with the SAMHSA and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to ensure that all New Mexico veterans have seamless access to mental health services. There is a specific focus on ensuring that any veteran being released from jail receive an immediate, warm hand-off to the appropriate mental health services. Under a SAMHSA

initiative, the VSD is working with New Mexico State University and veteran nonprofit agencies to create a peer network to address veterans' mental health in New Mexico.

In an effort to streamline veterans' transportation services, the VSD worked with the Veterans' Transportation and Community Living Initiative to host a "Transportation Summit". The organizations met to begin synchronization and to eliminate duplication of VA van routes and to ensure that all veterans have access to transportation to medical appointments, grocery stores and other services. The organizations are also working to advertise VA van services to educate veterans on the existing transportation services.

General Fox provided an update on the new "Women Veteran Program", explaining that the VSD has begun meeting with female veterans' groups and individual women to increase awareness and utilization of veteran resources. After meeting with various groups, the VSD has identified a need for daycare and child care services for VA patients and employees at VA hospitals. Due to the realization that it has not always taken care of the specific needs of female veterans, the VSD is coordinating with various entities to reach out to all female veterans to spread awareness of available programs and resources.

In 2015, the VA approved four state veterans' cemetery sites in Fort Stanton, Gallup, Angel Fire and Carlsbad. While the Fort Stanton site construction is about 70 percent complete, the other cemetery sites are still in the planning and design phases. The VSD outlined its long-term state cemetery plan that will keep the department on track for completing these projects.

General Fox concluded the presentation with an update of the department's budget, explaining that the VSD has experienced a 13 percent cut to the fiscal year 2016 budget. While the VSD hopes to maintain its quality of care and services, the department will have to delay or eliminate various veteran outreach services due to lack of funding.

On questioning, General Fox, Mr. Lawrence, Mr. Wagner and committee members noted that:

- (1) the proposed VA daycare services are not yet funded and do not yet have an implementation plan or time line; and
- (2) there are or will be two full-time employees at each cemetery site.

CNM Ingenuity Program

Samantha Sengel, chief advancement and community engagement officer, CNM, and Sionna Grassbaugh, academic affairs director, CNM Business and Information Technology, gave an overview of the various CNM Ingenuity workforce training programs geared toward student veterans. The four non-credit programs approved for student veterans are the Deep Dive Coding Bootcamp, IT professional series, network associate series and Deep Dive .NET Bootcamp. The program staff explained that the short-term, fast-track, easy enrollment and low-cost nature of the non-credit programs allow for affordable education options that result in national, regional or

CNM Ingenuity certification upon completion. Student veterans who participate in the non-credit programs also have access to various CNM veterans' resources, support services and career coaching.

On questioning, Ms. Sengel, Ms. Grassbaugh and committee members noted that:

- (1) the FUSE Makerspace at CNM allows for physical work space and equipment for trade training and entrepreneurial use;
- (2) the CNM Ingenuity program recruits students of all ages, students living in rural areas and low-income students and offers incentives such as reduced tuition and child care; and
- (3) student veterans have the opportunity to work with career coaches and to meet with potential employers who visit and recruit at the CNM campus.

CNM Veterans' Resource Center

David Walker, administrative coordinator, CNM Veterans' Resource Center (VRC), and Dr. Rudy Garcia, dean of students, CNM, gave an overview of the VRC, which provides resources and services to veterans and their families who currently attend or plan to attend CNM. The VRC, having served 2,228 veterans in the 2015 academic year and 2,478 veterans already in 2016, provides supportive personal and academic services such as tutoring, peer-to-peer mentoring, counseling, resource referral, assistance in applying for VA benefits and access to additional academic resources. The VRC provides additional support programs such as a reading circle, the Sky Warriors Program, Upward Bound, VA work-study positions, an on-site emergency food pantry, school supply donations and a textbook loan program. Mr. Walker and Dr. Garcia concluded their presentation with a video highlighting the Sky Warriors initiative, a program aimed at helping veteran students with posttraumatic stress disorder cope with post-military life by working with a team to fly hot air balloons.

Upon concluding the presentation and taking questions from the committee, Mr. Walker, Dr. Garcia and various veteran students led the committee on a tour of the VRC.

On questioning, Mr. Walker, Dr. Garcia and committee members noted that the VRC works with Goodwill Industries to provide clothing to student veterans, especially those in need of professional clothes for job interviews.

Sale of Pull-Tabs by Veterans Service Organizations

Donovan Lieurance, acting executive director, Gaming Control Board (GCB), and B.J. Lawrence, national junior vice-commander-in-chief, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), presented on their respective agencies' perspectives on the issuance of licenses for the sale of pull-tabs.

In 2014, the GCB appointed Mr. Lieurance as acting executive director. In reviewing the New Mexico Bingo and Raffle Act, the new director and staff noted inconsistencies between the act itself and the practices of the previous executive director. While the previous executive director issued stand-alone pull-tab licenses, the statute only allows for the sale of pull-tabs at

bingo occasions overseen by a licensed bingo manager. Further, no record exists of the board delegating authority to the executive director to issue stand-alone pull-tab licenses. As such, organizations with expiring pull-tab licenses, which may have been issued in error, were notified that they would have to apply for bingo licenses and could only sell pull-tabs at bingo occasions. GCB staff also advised that they would recommend denial of licenses to those organizations applying to sell pull-tabs only. The GCB believes that in order to allow stand-alone pull-tab sales and licensure outside of bingo occasions, the legislature would need to amend the act, which the GCB believes could run the risk of violating state-tribal gaming compacts.

However, Mr. Lawrence and other representatives from the VFW believe that the GCB has the authority to issue stand-alone pull-tab licenses, as they believe pull-tab sales are not considered Class III gaming and, thus, would not be a violation of the gaming compacts. The VFW expressed concern that veteran nonprofits rely heavily on pull-tab sales revenue to continue daily organizational operations. Furthermore, the VFW representatives expressed concern that veteran nonprofits have invested significant capital into pull-tab sales equipment, and the majority of nonprofits that serve veterans would not be able to afford the equipment and infrastructure necessary to become operational for bingo occasions.

On questioning, Mr. Lieurance, Mr. Lawrence and the committee noted that:

(1) the VFW requests that if the GCB is unable to use its authority to change pull-tab licensing restrictions, the legislature assist in passing legislation to allow for this licensing change; and

(2) it would be prudent to ask the Attorney General's Office whether stand-alone pull-tab sales are a violation of the gaming compacts.

★ On a motion duly made, seconded and unanimously adopted, committee staff was directed to draft a letter from the committee to the attorney general requesting responses to the following three questions.

(1) Is the sale of pull-tabs considered Class II gaming?

(2) Can the GCB currently issue stand-alone licenses for the sale of pull-tabs, rather than as part of a bingo occasion?

(3) Would changing the statute to allow the GCB to issue stand-alone licenses for the sale of pull-tabs be considered an expansion of gaming and, therefore, violate the state-tribal gaming compacts?

Minutes

On a motion duly made and seconded and unanimously adopted, the minutes from the June 2, 2016 and July 21, 2016 meetings were approved.

City of Albuquerque Veterans' Services Office

Roger D. Newall, veterans' affairs liaison, City of Albuquerque, gave an overview of the city's current veteran activities and services. The city has placed an increased priority on hiring qualified veterans, with 10 percent of the city's positions filled by veterans. In recent years, both the Albuquerque Police Department and Albuquerque Fire Department have won national awards for their efforts to prioritize hiring veterans. Mr. Newall also gave a general update on the city's efforts to reach out to homeless veterans, explaining that the mayor's office and some nonprofits are carrying out various homeless outreach programs across the city. Additionally, the office has recently worked on converting the VA medical card to function also as a bus and Rail Runner train pass to increase transportation access to veterans. Lastly, Mr. Newall described the office's other various projects to identify, recognize and award Albuquerque veterans for their service.

Army OneSource (AOS) Program

Toni Martorelli, senior level analyst, AOS, and Lilly Coniglio, managing partner, The Strategic Organization, presented on AOS, a program that aims to provide community support, data tools, best-practice recommendations, national web events, continuing education and a variety of services to veterans' organizations, veterans and veterans' families across the United States. AOS is focused on supporting states in supporting veterans, specifically within behavioral health, finance/employment, legal services and faith-based considerations. AOS collaborates with various local, state and national organizations to bring culturally sensitive and comprehensive services to veterans and their families.

Ms. Martorelli and Ms. Coniglio provided the committee with AOS data on the demographics, age, education level, occupation, current salary, family size and years of service of New Mexico veterans. The presenters urged the committee and the legislature to utilize AOS services and the AOS Resource Center to more effectively and comprehensively reach out to and serve New Mexico veterans and their families.

On questioning, Ms. Martorelli, Ms. Coniglio and the committee noted that:

- (1) AOS keeps deployment data for each state from September 11, 2001 through 2016;
- (2) the National Guard Reserve deploys units based upon the unit's speciality, and AOS believes income level and geographic location are not factors in deployment; and
- (3) AOS will work with military spouses to seek employment, professional licensing and other needed services.

★ Ms. Coniglio will put Representative Dines in contact with the National Military Spouse Network to provide further information on support for military spouses.

Museum of the American Military Family

Dr. Circe Olson Woessner and Dr. Allen Dale Olson, executive director and public affairs official, respectively, Museum of the American Military Family, gave an overview of the museum and its efforts as the first museum to recognize military families in the United States.

Dr. Olson Woessner began the presentation with a video describing the history that led to the 2011 founding of the all-volunteer, 501(c)(3) nonprofit museum located in Tijeras, New Mexico. The museum collects military family belongings, artifacts and stories to display the intricate details of military family life. While museums across the nation focus on specific wars or on the lives of service members, this museum pays special tribute to army spouses and children and the home life when a service member is away. With financial support from grants and community organizations, all of the museum exhibits are free and open to the public. The museum is currently launching its fourth major exhibit since 2011, and the museum board members hope to see the 20,000 annual visitors that their previous exhibits have attracted.

On questioning, Dr. Olson Woessner, Dr. Olson and the committee noted that:

- (1) the museum has taken on "Operation Footlocker", a project in which military families send artifacts and memories to one another, which will be housed at the museum; and
- (2) the museum is partnering with other agencies to address issues such as nonviolent communication, LGTBQ military families and military mental health.

Warrior Farmer Project

Victor Versace and Richard Baca II, executive director and project organizer, respectively, Desert Forge Foundation, gave an overview of the organization's Warrior Farmer Project, an effort aimed at restoring the mental, physical and emotional health of returning veterans through the arts and farming. By growing organic green chile and other fresh produce in Albuquerque's South Valley neighborhood since 2010, the project trains combat and other veterans to cultivate, grow, harvest and sell the farm's produce. Through donations of land, water and utilities from neighbors and with grant funding from various organizations, the foundation plans to continue reaching out to veterans through various arts programs. Mr. Versace explained that he hopes the Warrior Farmer Project will be self-sustaining within five years.

On questioning, Mr. Versace, Mr. Baca and the committee noted that:

- (1) project organizers should look into selling green chile to local restaurants;
- (2) the legislature appropriated funds to New Mexico State University for the purchase of Los Luceros farms, which might be used to help expand the project;
- (3) funding from either the legislature or elsewhere would help the program expand, particularly by allowing organizers to pay for up-front capital needs next spring;
- (4) organizers hope to expand the project to include other crops, livestock and eventually a commercial kitchen;
- (5) crops are grown without chemicals and use a drip watering system to save water; and
- (6) green chile is sold at the downtown Albuquerque farmers' market for a \$10.00 donation to the project, which buys a one-pound bag of chile.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.