



West Virginia Veterans Council
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 26, 2017

- The meeting was held in the Green Room at the West Virginia State Capitol's Culture Center.
- Meeting called to order by Chairman Harrison Gilliam.
- Eight members were present, enough to establish a quorum.
- Members present were: Harrison Gilliam, Randall Bare, James DeCarlo, Mary Byrd, Bill Harris, Jack Gerrard, James McCormick, Cedric Greene, Woody Williams.
- Also attending: WVDVA Cabinet Secretary Dennis Davis; Deputy Cabinet Secretary Billy Wayne Bailey, WVDVA Chief of Staff Randy Coleman, WVDVA Officer Manager Elizabeth Cruikshank, WVDVA Operations Manager Mike Lyons, West Virginia Veterans Nursing Facility Administrator Kevin Crickard, Wesley Walls (Clarksburg VA Medical Center), Brian Abraham (General Council, Governor Justice), Bruce Murphy, Shane Sullivan (VAMC, Beckley), Debbie Brammer (VAMC, Huntington), John Hancock, Ken Rubin, Jim Robinson, Teri Booth (U.S. Rep. Evan Jenkins), Mara Boggs (U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin) James Ross, Jeff Elkins (VFW, District 2), Pauline Gerrard, Jack Tincher (TREA), Rick Given.

UNFINISHED AND REGULAR BUSINESS

- Randall Bare (via Woody Williams) discussed legislation recently approved by the VFW that call for tax relief legislation that is a petition for tax relief as it pertains to real property. In West Virginia in 2015 two resolutions were introduced that would offer property tax exemptions for veterans. One would exempt veterans who are 100 percent disabled from paying property taxes. The second would exempt honorable discharged veterans of the Armed Forces from the first \$30,000. Mr. Bare stated that this is a nationwide push. Hoping for all 50 states to pass resolutions. Petitions were made available. ... Woody Williams asked if there is a legislative representative that could speak to lawmakers on behalf of the Veterans Council. ... Randy Bare was voted to be the lead legislative liaison, with James McCormick serving as second.
- Chairman Gilliam suggested that the Council begin to do due diligence toward getting a tax incentive bill passed in the Legislature. He suggested the Council work with legislative finance committees to establish the cost of a State tax break for retired

military personnel. The Chairman suggested that Deputy Secretary Bailey be utilized as a legislative lead and that Cabinet Secretary Davis approach the governor's staff to determine whether a tax-incentive bill is feasible and do-able. ... Chairman Gilliams suggested that a phased approach to tax-free or tax-deferred status for military retirees might be the way to go. ... James McCormick suggested a phased-in approach over four years. ... Randall Bare suggested that the approach should be 100 percent or nothing. He said that the tax exemption could hurt counties and suggested that perhaps a tax exemption applied to veterans' pay might be more appropriate. ... Mr. McCormick and several other members suggested that the incentive might bring retirees to West Virginia. ... Council members voted to go after 100 percent money on a State retirement tax-break bill for retired veterans.

- Chairman Gilliam stated that he has not heard any discussion of challenges to the fireworks bill. ... Deputy Secretary Bailey stated that there has been some talk of giving counties the ability to legislative local fireworks. He said that he believes that the Council and other veteran leaders can help stop any momentum toward letting this happen.
- James McCormick said he received a letter from Donna Decker, who is new chair of the West Virginia Veterans Coalition. ... Mr. McCormick said a meeting was scheduled the following Saturday at Parchment Valley, in Ripley. He said this group is active in pushing legislation and would like to encourage the Council and the Coalition to find common ground. ... Mary Byrd asked how to get the message to other organizations that the Veterans Council is a lead organization on legislation. Chairman Gilliam stated that many groups have tried to come up with a way to track where the veterans in West Virginia are. ... Mr. Harris questioned whether any questionnaires have been utilized through other veterans organizations to determine what issues are most important to state veterans.

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NEW BUSINESS

CABINET SECRETARY'S REPORT

REMARKS BY COUNCIL MEMBERS

OTHER BUSINESS

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