



**SOUTH DAKOTA VETERANS COUNCIL**  
**The American Legion, Disabled American Veterans,**  
**Veterans of Foreign Wars,**  
**Paralyzed Veterans of America,**  
**1054 & 959 Vietnam Veterans of America**  
**Military Order of the Purple Heart**



**Aberdeen Yelduz Shrine Center, VFW Post #17**  
**802 S Main St.**  
**17 JULY 2024 - 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM CST**  
**Microsoft Teams Meeting Information**  
**Meeting ID: 281 504 409 876**  
**Passcode: RXD8u4**

## **Minutes**

### **Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance**

The meeting of the South Dakota Veterans Council (SDVC) was called to order by at 1:02 p.m. and led in the Pledge of Allegiance by President Connie Johnson.

### **Prayer & Roll Call**

Vice President Anna Arnold led the Council in opening prayer and conducted roll call of the Council showing the following members present and a Quorum was met. A current list of Council Members was provided. Handout Provided dated July 12, 2024.

**American Legion (TAL):** C.P. Van DeList (TAL)

**Disabled American Veterans (DAV):** Kim Hubers (DAV) and Marty Pennock (DAV)

**Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW):** Anna Arnold (VFW), Glynis Collier (VFW), and Dan Klimisch (VFW)

**Vietnam Veterans of America Chapters 1054 and 959 (VVA):** Bob Frink (1054) Phil Braeger (1054) and Terry "Hawk" Mayer (959)

**Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH):** Connie Johnson, (MOPH) and Buck Underwood (MOPH)

**North Central Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA):** Terry Paulsen (PVA)

**Official Officers Excused:** Gene Murphy (DAV), Lisa Cummings (PVA) , Mike Olson (PVA) Bill Flippo (MOPH)

There was a total of 23 present by head count for the meeting (attached sign in roster)

**Officers That Attended VIA Online:** Kevin Morello (TAL) and Fred Nelson (TAL)

**Welcome Distinguished Guests and Visitors**

President Connie Johnson

**Minutes of Last Meeting**

President Johnson called on Secretary-Treasurer Pennock to read the minutes from the June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024, SDVC meeting.

On a motion by Terry Mayer (VVA 959) and seconded by Anna Arnold (VFW) to waive the reading of the minutes from the June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024, SDVC meeting, and approved them as written as they were posted on the Council website and provided to members prior to the July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024, SDVC meeting. Motion carried.

**Treasurer's Report**

President Johnson called on Secretary-Treasurer Pennock for a Treasurer's Report.

Beginning Balance as of June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024, was \$8,082.59, with \$814.40 deposits and \$879.19 of expenses leaving a balance, as of July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024, of \$8,017.80.

All organizational membership dues of \$250.00 were paid for 2024-2025.

Shirts were handed out to Aaron Pollard, Phil Braeger, Terry Mayer, Gene Murphy, and Christine Speirs. Everyone has been notified to pay what is owed to the Council. Gene Murphy, and Terry Mayer have paid for their shirt. A shirt is still to be handed to Courtney Steffen.

Business Filing for the State of South Dakota is due August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, and will be completed after the Council Meeting.

On a motion by Anna Arnold (VFW) and seconded by Terry Paulsen (PVA) to approve the Treasurer's Report. Discussion. Motion carried.

**Endowment Fund Report**

President Johnson provided the endowment fund report. Total Net Assets July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024, \$3,315,142.78.

## Recognition of Individuals

### Updates from Each Veterans Service Organization- Nov Notes Listed

#### VFW: Anna Arnold reported

- Introduce New Commander Glynis Collier
- Raffle Starts August 1, 2024
- July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024, Chislic Feed in Freeman
- July 1 New Year for Recruiting and Goal is 102%
- Homelessness and Food are Priorities in the VFW

#### VVA:

1054 – Phil Braeger reported

- Fund Raising – Elk Hunted Completed
- Flag Day – Handed out Stick Flags and Raised over \$9,600.00 in Donations
- Transportation Working with DAV

959 – Terry Mayer reported

- Memorial Day Ceremony Completed
- POW/MIA Ceremony in Sioux Falls – September 20<sup>th</sup>

#### TAL: C.P. Van DeList reported

- District Meetings Around the State of Late
- Resolutions
  - SD TAL Dues Increase
  - Fund Raising Events
  - Post-Secondary Credit
  - Who Can Serve on the SDVC – 3 Year Terms
  - 100<sup>th</sup> Annual Anniversary Baseball Tournament
  - Property Rights – Failed
  - Health and Wellness

- Introduce New Commander Kevin Morello
- Scout Scholarship Explained as Priority in Command
  - 240 Posts 1ith 1 per post
- National Membership Workshop in Indianapolis Wee of July 22
- National Convention in August in New Orleans
- Major Richard Star Act

**DAV:** Kim Hubers reported

- August 2-7 will be our National Convention in Phoenix, AZ.
- Emergency Relief Funds From DAV National - \$61,500, 70 Checks
- Vehicle Being Procured for Sisseton HTP
- 55 Resolutions Passed at Sate Convention
- Women Veterans Report and Bried by Senator Thune’s Office
- Abbey of the Hills – October 11<sup>th</sup> – Oct 13<sup>th</sup>
- SD DAV Fall Conference October 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>
- 727 Charity Poker Run – August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024
- Greg – Local Artist – Designing Branches and will be at DAV Home on August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at 5:30 p.m.

**MOPH:** Buck Underwood reported

- Working with County, City, and Businesses on MOPH Naming
- Supporting Two Organizations – Wings of Valor in Parker and Warriors Never Give Up
- 7 August is Purple Heart Day Doing Violas August 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> in Sioux Falls

**PVA:** Terry Paulsen reported

- May fishing event – May 23-24 Completed
- Lisa Cummings Retiring and Replacement has Been Hired to Start July 23<sup>rd</sup>
- PVA Picnic July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024
- Annual Crooks Gun Club Trap Shoot – August 6<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup>
- Top Gun Hunt – September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024

## **Guest Speakers**

### **Orange Heart Medal Foundation: Bobby Tyner**

- Spoke on South Dakota House Commemoration 8102
- Handouts Given – Contact Ken Gamble – 615-973-5279
- [www.orangeheartmedalfoundation.org](http://www.orangeheartmedalfoundation.org)
- Jerry Denman Recognized for His Service

### **South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Whitlock**

- Update on Fallen Bridges
  - 53 Bridges to 59 Veterans to Date
  - This Year, Three have been Completed and Nine Scheduled.
- Update on What's Brewing
  - Hosted 14 Events
    - Travel, Timely Reimbursement, and Tinley Appointments in CITC Top Issues
- Update on Veterans Never Forgotten
  - Contacted 31 Facilities

### **South Dakota Department of Veteran Affairs Overview: Deputy Secretary Pollard**

- Update on Paul Weckman
- State Nursing Home
  - All 655 Nursing beds Full with 10 Independent Beds with No Vacancies
  - No Out of State Residents
  - Staffing must be Fixed Before Opening Closed Wing – Working with BHR on Target Audiences and Wage Analysis, Higher Shift Differential (Night)
    - 11 CNAs and 5 LPNs on Staff
- CVSO/TVSO Training September 3-5 in Sioux Falls
- Will Have a Booth at the Expo Building at the State Fair
- Veterans Day August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at the State Fair
- December 14<sup>th</sup> is Wreaths Across America

### **Sioux Falls Veterans Administration Health Care System: Executive Director/CEO Sara Ackert**

- See Attached Notes
- See Attached Notes for Black Hills Veterans Administration Health Care System
- Travel Benefits Presentation – See PowerPoint

### **Dakotas Regional Office: Assistant Sioux falls Veterans Service Center Manager Megan Carter**

- Discontinuation of VA Form 0781-1
- POA Can Sign 995

### **Senator Thune's Office – Judy Vrchota**

**NDAA:** On June 14, the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) voted 22-3 to advance the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal year (FY) 2025 to the Senate floor. Congress has successfully passed an NDAA 63 years in a row. If passed before the end of the year, this NDAA would be the 64<sup>th</sup> annual defense authorization bill passed by Congress.

The Senate's version of the annual NDAA supports a total of \$923.3 billion in FY 2025 funding for national defense. Within this topline, the legislation authorizes \$878.4 billion for the Department of Defense (DOD) and \$33.4 billion for national security programs within the Department of Energy. Under SASC Ranking Member Roger Wicker's leadership, this topline represents a \$25 billion increase to the defense budget so we can adequately meet today's growing threats from the new axis of aggressors: China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea. It also authorizes a 4.5 percent pay raise for servicemembers and a 2 percent pay raise for DOD civilian employees.

The next step for the legislation would be a full vote in the Senate. Senator Thune will continue to fight for pro-South Dakota provisions to be included in the final version, which historically becomes law at the end of the calendar year.

#### **Thune requests included in the markup:**

1. Full B-21 funding, including \$2.65 billion for R&D and \$2.68 billion for procurement.
2. \$282 million Ellsworth B-21 MilCon
  1. \$44M for Squadron Operations
  2. \$79M for Alert Apron Environmental Protection Shelters
  3. \$54M for other Environmental Protection Shelters
  4. \$105M for the Weapons Generation Facility

Senator Thune joined the Midwest Honor Flight at the WWII Memorial . It was a fantastic event on the eve of the D-Day anniversary with over 60 SD veterans, including two WWII veterans. There was a school group at the memorial when the veterans arrived and they lined the pathway clapping for the veterans as they all got off the buses – it was such a neat moment.

*Here are some of his remarks from the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the heroic landings on D-Day.*

*80 years ago today, over 150,000 allied troops stormed the beaches of Normandy, and carried with them the hopes of the free world. Undeterred by logistical details, bad weather, or the threat of the Nazis, these front-liners of the Greatest Generation lowered the ramps of their landing craft and set out on the daunting task of wresting Europe from the clutches of the Axis Powers.*

*What makes the members of that Greatest Generation so great is their commitment to, and willingness to put their lives on the line for, the values we Americans hold dear. The American troops who landed at Omaha Beach, Utah Beach, and Pointe du Hoc on June 6, 1944 selflessly dedicated themselves to the enduring cause of freedom for which our nation stands.*

*I've walked through the American cemetery at Normandy and seen with my own eyes the headstones of the American soldiers who never made it home. These patriots paid the ultimate price for the freedoms we enjoy today, and we owe them a tremendous debt of gratitude for their sacrifice. Dozens of D-Day veterans, most now over 100 years old, made the trip back to Normandy to pay their respects. We should join them in remembering their brothers-in-arms.*

*Today, as we mourn the lives lost on that fateful day, we also celebrate the cause for which they fought. All those who served in World War II, from the European theater to the islands of the Pacific where my father served as a Navy pilot, deserve our gratitude and recognition. We can honor their legacy by upholding the American traditions of faith, family, and freedom.*

*In his Order of the Day for D-Day, General Dwight D. Eisenhower told the troops: "You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are on you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you." They did not let us down. May God bless the families of the fallen, the veterans who came home, and those who continue to serve.*

#### **Senator Round's Office – Jennifer Hieb**

- Major Richard Star Act Discussion by Dan Klimisch
- Community Meetings Around the State
- Chevron Doctrine Discussion

#### **Congressman Johnson's Office – Andrea Rose-Prehn**

- *(Recognizing Military Service Act)* - which will allow military service men and women who choose to put their public loans in deferment or forbearance during a deployment, to be allowed to count that timeframe toward loan forgiveness (currently it is not). Dusty had planned to introduce this in the coming weeks *(it will hopefully be a bipartisan bill)*.
- FY 2025 NDAA *(this past June)* which honors nation's commitment to Veterans by fully funding medical health care *(at approx \$113 Billion)* and fully funds Veterans' benefits and toxic exposure-related needs for Fiscal Year 2025.
- *(Vietnam Veterans Liver Fluke Cancer Study Act)* which would require the VA to conduct studies and report back on the prevalence of bile duct cancer in Vets who serving during Vietnam conflict. This bill was introduced last year but has not moved out of the House Veterans Committee yet (to my knowledge). Important to note, the VA is still taking steps to expedite care for all Vets who were exposed to cancer-inducing toxins during service in military (home or abroad).
- Dusty and our team are currently in conversations with national, state, and local personnel in discussing the challenges to Veteran Rural Transport. Our Leg Director has been having several conversations with VSOs in the state to get a better understanding of how the HRTG programs may provide a path forward if the threshold is raised from 7 PPSM to 10 PPSM.

- House bill that came out of House Veterans Affairs Committee (*this has not made it to the Floor*) that addressed long-term care for Vets and centers around idea of a three-year pilot program for eligible Vets to received Assisted Living Care (by VA) given the proponents feel this would significantly cut costs for VA (given Nursing Home fees are exorbitantly higher).

Office continues to engage in congressional casework for all South Dakotans on a daily basis. They liaise with federal agencies and work to help everyday South Dakotans get status updates, answers, or action (where feasible) as it relates to a federal agency issue (i.e. IRS, SSA, USCIS, DOS, VA, DOE, DOS, etc). They cannot demand outcomes, but can rattle cages and advocate wherever feasibly possible.

### **Unfinished Business**

- 2025 Legislation
- Transportation – Phil Brager – Reported again on the meetings with the VA, HRTG Status Resolution and Elimination of the 30% for Eligible Travel - What is the Status of the SB that Senator Rounds Has?

### **Support Changes to Highly Rural Transit Grant Requirements**

WHEREAS, The Current VA Policy states that a Veteran may be eligible for beneficiary travel services if the following criteria are met:

- Have a service-connected (SC) rating of 30 percent or more, or
- Are traveling for treatment of a SC condition, or
- Receive a VA pension, or your income does not exceed the maximum annual VA pension rate, or
- Are traveling for a scheduled compensation of pension, or if not otherwise eligible as noted above and;
- Have a vision impairment, spinal cord injury or disorder, or a double or multiple amputation who's travel is connection with care provided through a VA special disabilities rehabilitation program (including programs provided by spinal cord injury centers, blind rehabilitation centers and prosthetics rehabilitation centers) if such care is provided on an inpatient basis or during a period in which you are provided with temporary lodging at a facility or the Department to make such care more accessible. including programs; and

Whereas: the VA has modified where medical treatment can be provided based on distance from a VA medical facility. In rural areas, there has been no subsequent adjustment in travel for medical care at the VA, CBOC or Care in the Community. Service-connected veterans below 30% SC disability deserve the right to transportation for medical care as those that are SC at 30% or more; and

Whereas: The US government told the soldiers on entering the service that they would take care of them. There was no mention of how disabled they would have to be to get access to that



medical coverage or disability levels brought about while under military care; and

Whereas: It has been shown that the current transportation system has proven to be almost non-effective in rural areas (and some urban areas) because of the shortage of volunteer drivers, inadequate DAV vans (for mobility impaired/ handicapped) and too few VA VTS vehicles it is apparent that the answer to the current situation should be VA support of community transit or similar public, independent, local or regional transportation systems which are by law required to be ADA compliant; and

Whereas: From the current reports from VA transportation over 75% of ridership IN URBAN AREAS, is on VA VTS vehicles and only 25% by DAV vans it is apparent that the current system of relying on DAV vans that are non-ADA compliant in Rural areas and the lack of VA VTS vehicles and drivers for those Rural areas does not fulfill the mission of caring for those who have born the battle; and

Whereas: Prevention and Early Intervention will improve the veteran's quality of life allowing and enabling all veteran's health care to preclude or reduce the impact of medical issues. Allowing SC disabled vet to be more proactive on his care will allow the VA medical team to catch medical issues before they become more serious. In rural area's travel cost is prohibitive; and

Whereas: The current DAV van transportation system does not work in rural areas. The DAV Transportation does not meet the requirements of the American Disabilities Act. In rural areas most volunteer drivers are over the age of 65 and not trained to handle medical emergencies and due to age are physically incapable of rendering medical assistance even those the vets being transported are in a higher risk category. None of the DAV Vans are equipped with AED's; and

Whereas: The VTS / VA transportation has a 30% SC disability rating required to get travel for medical care. In rural area's VTS transportation does not have good coverage as trips can be in excess of over 250 miles round trip and total trip time in exceed 8 hours.; and

Whereas: Veterans in living in rural areas that are less than 30% SC disabled are not reimbursed for travel. The standard of living in rural areas is not as good as in urban areas. There are 14.9 million disabled Veterans in the United States, 5.6 million Service-Connected disabled Vets in the US. In 2022 there were 1,134,807 that had a 10-20% service-connected rating, 609,802 with a 30-40% with a SC disability rating, 604,495 @a 50-60% rating and 2,071,610 that were rated as 70 -100% Service-connected disabled. The 1.13 million SC vets below the 30% SC disability level should to be treated like the those over 30%; and

Whereas: On March 17, 2023, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced an updated version of its 1959 mission statement. The new mission statement is "To fulfill Presidents Lincoln's promise op care for those who have served in our nation's military and for their families, caregivers, and survivors. Note there are no qualifications implied or stated; NOW

Therefore Be it Resolved that the Disabled American Veterans in State Convention assembled in Deadwood, South Dakota on April 27, 2024, that the Current VA Policy be modified so “A veteran may be eligible for beneficiary travel Services if the following criteria are met:

- Have a service-connected (SC) rating of 0 percent or more, or
  - Are traveling for treatment for a treatment approved by the VA at a VA medical facility, a CBOC, or an approved Care in the Community appointment. The only requirement for travel reimbursement is if the appointment was made by VA.
  - Receive a VA pension, or your income does not exceed the maximum annual VA pension rate, or
  - Are traveling for a scheduled compensation of pension, or if not otherwise eligible as noted above and;
  - Have a vision impairment, spinal cord injury or disorder, or a double or multiple amputation who’s travel is connection with care provided through a VA special disabilities rehabilitation program (including programs provided by spinal cord injury centers, blind rehabilitation centers and prosthetics rehabilitation centers) if such care is provided on an inpatient basis or during a period in which you are provided with temporary lodging at a facility or the Department to make such care more accessible. including programs.
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- Mental Health – Kim Hubers- Overview of DAV Women’s Report - Tie SDVC Effort to Parks Entrance
  - Property Tax for Disabled Veterans – Vice President Anna Arnold – Summer Study – Do not Bring Back at This Time With the Efforts That Have Gone on Last Year in Mind
  - Major Richard Star Act – Dan Klimisch – SDVC Letter to the CODELs – President Johnson will Draft Letter for Review to Send to the Delegates
  - Long Term Medical Care – President Johnson – No Planning Conferences Set by the SDDVA - Where are we at with SB 495?
  - Sales Tax Exemption – Vice President Anna Arnold – SDVC Does Not Feel Warranted to Support
  - C/TVSO Pay and Unaccredited Parties Filing Claims – Dan Klimisch- Inquire to County Commissioners if They Plan on Redrafting What They Were Bringing to The Table Last Year
  - SD GFP Park Entrance – President Johnson – Add MOPH to the ARSD - Get MOPH Numbers to GFP - Next Meeting?

- Educational Benefits – President Johnson – Will Develop Bill for Council Review
- 2024-2025 Officer Elections – Not Completed. Will be done August Council Meeting
- Chet Sorenson Award – President Johnson Will be sending out the awards electronically to vote on
- C/TVSO – No Discussion
- Final Salute Miss Veteran America – Video will be sent out the Council for viewing
- Progressive Insurance: Keys to Progress – Deadline for submission is August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024

## 9. New Business

- Flag Disposal – State Veterans Cemetery – Marty Pennock – Secretary Pollard will meet with Stu Turnwall and Marty Pennock to discuss the disposal of flags at the State Veterans Cemetery
- Land Gift – State Veterans Cemetery – President Johnson – Secretary Pollard reported this has gone nowhere. Note there is an easement on this property. No plans to pursue this currently as there is enough room.

## Good of the Order and Closing Comments

- SD Compensation – End of 2023
- Park Prescription
- SDVC By Laws – Date April 17, 2024
- 2024 Meeting Dates –
  - August 21 – Yankton VFW Post #791, 209 S. Cedar, starting at 1:00 p.m. CST. POC: Anna Arnold 314-435-5772
  - September 18 - Rapid City The American Legion Post 22, 818 E. Saint Patrick St., starting at 9:00 a.m. MT. POC C.P. Van Delist 605-210-0428
  - October 16 – Brookings The American Legion Post 74, 1229 Western Ave., starting at 1:00 p.m. CST. POC: Connie Johnson 605-651-3649
  - November 20 – Sioux Falls – DAV, 1519 W. 51<sup>st</sup> St, Sioux Falls, starting at 9:00 a.m. CST. POC: Marty Pennock 605-332-6866
    - Nov. 20 Legislative Roundtable – Sioux Falls, DAV – 12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. CST
    - Nov. 21 Legislative Roundtable – Watertown, TAL Post 17
    - Nov. 22 Legislative Roundtable – Rapid City, TAL Post 22
    - Nov. 23 Legislative Roundtable - Pierre, TAL Post 8
  - January 15, 2025 – Pierre – TAL Post 8, 520 S. Pierre, SD 57501, POC Kaitlyn 605-224-7681

**Closing Prayer**

Vice President Arnold provided a closing prayer.

**Honors to the American Flag and Adjournment**

President Johnson rendered honors to the flag.

On a motion by Anna Arnold (VFW) and seconded by Dan Klimisch (VFW) to adjourn the meeting motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 4:32 p.m.