



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



THE AMERICAN LEGION POST 74, 1229 WESTERN AVE., BROOKINGS
16 October 2024 - 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM CST
Microsoft Teams Meeting Information
Meeting ID: 281 504 409 876
Passcode: RXD8u4

Minutes

Call to Order

Vice President Arnold called to order the meeting at 1:00 p.m. and led the Council in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Prayer & Roll Call

Treasurer Marty Pennock 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 date October 11th, 2024.

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

Disabled American Veterans (DAV): Marty Pennock (DAV) and Gene Murphy (DAV)

Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW): Anna Arnold (VFW)

Vietnam Veterans of America Chapters 1054 and 959 (VVA): Bob Frink (1054) and Terry “Hawk” Mayer (959)

Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH): Buck Underwood (MOPH) and Bill Flippo (MOPH)

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

Official Officers Excused: Kim Hubers (DAV), Connie Johnson (MOPH), Phil Braeger (1054), Fred Nelson (TAL), and Mike Olson (PVA)

Official Officers Attended Via Online: Dan Klimisch (VFW), Glynis Collier (VFW) arrive at 1:38 p.m., and Kevin Morello (TAL)

Welcome Distinguished Guests and Visitors - None

Minutes of Last Meeting

Vice President Arnold called on Treasurer Pennock to read the minutes from the August 21st, 2024, SDVC meeting.

On a motion by Terry Mayer (VVA 959) and seconded by Gene Murphy (DAV) to waive the reading of the minutes from the August 21st, 2024, SDVC meeting. Discussion. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report

Vice President Arnold called on Treasurer Pennock for a Treasurer's Report.

Beginning Balance as of August 21st, 2024, was \$9,017.80, with \$1,000.00 deposits and \$375.76 of expenses leaving a balance, as of October 16th, 2024, of \$8,642.04.

September 2024 First Interstate Bank Statement was available.

On a motion by Terry Paulsen (PVA) and seconded by Bob Frink (PVA 1054) to approve up to \$200.00 for food and refreshments for the November 23rd, 2024, Legislative Roundtable in Fort Pierre at the Moose Lodge. Discussion. Motion carried.

On a motion by Gene Murphy (DAV) and seconded by Terry Mayer (VVA 959) to approve the deposit of \$100.00 to secure the American Legion Post 8 for the January 15th Legislative Reception venue. Discussion. Motion carried.

On a motion by Terry Paulsen (PVA) and seconded by Buck Underwood (MOPH) to approve up to \$1000.00 for the purchase of food items for the January 2025 Legislative Reception. Motion carried.

On a motion by Gene Murphy (DAV) and seconded by Bill Flippo (MOPH) to approve the Treasurer's Report. Discussion. Motion carried.

Endowment Fund Report

Vice President Arnold provided the endowment fund report. Ending Fund Balance October 8th, 2024, \$3,494,508.19. Handout Provided.

Updates from Each Veterans Service Organization

Vice President Arnold asked that all organizations at the next Council meeting be prepared to provide a report that does more than just lists past or upcoming events. Please describe how each organization is assisting Veterans within their organization.

VVA:

1054 – Phil Braeger reported

- Flood Emergency Relief Funds Given to Veteran in McCook Lake \$2,500.00
- \$5000.00 given to Hurricane Relief State
- Gift Cards being given to 9 County Area in NE SD
- Working with Senator Rounds on Transportation Issues
- School Presentations Started of VVA Video

959 – Terry Mayer reported

- Stand Down in Sioux Falls – Friday September 20th, 8:30 am-11:30 am – Alliance – 160 Veterans Serviced

VFW: Anna Arnold reported

Big 10 Conference this weekend Indianapolis

Jan 12- 13 Legislative @AmericInn 5-8 Open House

90.98 % Membership

Fall Conference, great turnout September 27-29

Phone Care for Tracfone, Starting an Initiative to Make that Happen

Claim Sharks Still a Big Push with VFW – Guard Act

VOD/PP- End for Post Oct 31st

VFW Book Has been release if hou Ordered One, It Should be Coming Our Soon

Nov 11 in Yankton Veterans Day

VFW.ORG for Vets in Need for the Hurricane Relief

TAL: C.P. Van DeList reported

- Two resolutions for national consideration
 - Credit for Service - Passed
 - Health and Wellness expansion for Veterans - Not Passed
- National Workshop Completed
- \$3000 in National Emergency Assistance Provided to McCook Lake Recovery
- Service Project – Camping Scholarships for Scouting– \$4000 raised so far, looking for each Post to send one scout to camp. It cost \$400 to send a scout.
- 5 of 8 District Meetings Completed
- Midwinter 14-16 Feb Oacoma

DAV: Gene Murphy reported

- August 2-7 held the National Convention in Phoenix, AZ.
- 32 of 55 Resolutions adopted by National
- Vehicle Procured for Sisseton HTP
- Abbey of the Hills – October 11th – Oct 13th
- SD DAV Fall Conference October 4th and 5th
- 727 Charity Poker Run – August 31st, 2024 - \$57,000.00 , 740 participants, ½ Million Dollars
- FMN – 51K
- State Fair August 27th – September 2nd – Bingo
- Membership Plug - \$325.00 Full Life / Department

MOPH: Bill Flippo reported

- Four (4) Cities Being Named Purple Heart
- Next 30 Days – (3) Cities and (2) Counties
- Every County Next Year for the 727 Run will be a Purple Heart County
- Pheasant Hunt Oct 24 – Pheasant Hunt at Wings of Valor

PVA: Terry Paulsen reported

Lisa Cummings retired end of August moved to Az – Hired Tracy Salaneh
 Vacancy on the Council – Todd Rose filled that
 Audit being WrappedUp
 Pheasant hunts in September – 40 Disabled Vets on two hunts

Guest Speakers

- SD Department of Veterans Affairs: Deputy Director Aaron Pollard
- Fallen Hero Bridge Nov 11 Joesph Thorn Beresford High school 1:30
- 53 Bridges to 59 Veterans / 100 applications on file can do 12 per year
- Wreaths Across America Dec 14 -11 am Cemetery
- Midwest Honor Flight -- Nov 18 Barrell House 10 Percent of Sales Go to Honor Flight
- Governor's Budget Address - Dec 3rd, 1:00 p.m.
- State of State January 14th, 1:00 p.m.
- Nov 27 Secretary Whitlock Retires

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

Veterans treated in the VA and Community care

- FY 23: 25,727
- FY 24: 26,425

PACT Act Update

As of October 1, 2024:

- 24,269 Unique Veterans screened.
- 42% of Veterans reporting at least one exposure.

Compact Act Update

- Sioux Falls has had a total of 222 Veterans covered under the COMPACT ACT since it was rolled out in January. There are currently 41 Veterans who have an active episode.

Construction Update

- Work is progressing on the 10-bed Hospice Cottage and we anticipate completion in the next few months.
- The construction of a new Pre-Op and Same Day Surgery is ongoing, expected completion February 2025.
- The EHRM infrastructure project is ongoing, completion has been delayed due to construction issues.
- A project to maintain/repair the water tower has started, and will be finished yet this construction season.

Business Office Update

Veteran Transportation Services:

- We have a new Ground Transportation contract which started 10/1/24
 - Vendor – Gov Tranz
- Watertown VTS Driver started 10/7/2024. He is currently in orientation. The desire is to operate this vehicle similar to how the Dakota Dunes driver manages the southern counties. He will be working closely with DAV drivers to accommodate the maximum number of Veterans/trips.

Beneficiary Travel:

- Travel claims backlog = 703 claims (oldest date – 9/12/2024)

Staffing Updates

Nurse Staffing:

- RN has 371 active positions and 327 filled. 11.85% Vacancy Rate

- LPN 9% Vacancy Rate

Community Care Update

Community Care Referrals –

- FY 23: 41,955
- FY 24: 45,457

Scheduling Numbers

- Average Daily Scheduled: 221 Per Day (FY24 - 56,072)
- Pending-Active LTE 2 Days: 96.7% (FY24 - 96.1%)
- FED to 1st Scheduled Avg: 9.1 Days *VISN BEST!*

Call Center Numbers

- Call Center Avg Incoming: 269 Per Day (FY24 - 66,842)
- Call Center Avg Wait Time: 25 Seconds
- Call Center Handle Rate: 98%
- Clinical Incoming/Outgoing: 300 Per Day

Utilization of Call Center

- Call center is the BEST way to reach us, Call 605-333-6800 Option 2.

Community Care Copays

- In July 24, VA resumed billing
- 1st party copays for non-service connected care
- 3rd party payers for Veterans who have billable health insurance and received care for non-service-connected care.
- All Veterans who obtained care in the community and are copayment required, just as if they had received care within a VA medical facility.
- Information for Veterans about managing their VA debt for copayment bills is available at <https://www.va.gov/health-care/pay-copayment-bill/financial-hardship/>.

Home Health Update For skilled and non-skilled services:

- July 2024 we served 145 different Veterans which and conducted 930 total visits.
- August 2024 we served 148 different Veterans and conducted 785 total visits.

Rural Transportation Task Force met 9/30/24

- Guest presenters Kathleen Metzger, Deputy Director, Member Services, VTP and Dina Hohn, Regional VTP Manager. Provided an overview of their program to include the Highly Rural Transportation Grant.
- Matt Twitchell, Experience Officer provided an update of DAV Vehicle locations, miles driven, and drivers. Miles driven and number of volunteer drivers is up compared to last year.
- Long discussion on options to pay drivers. Neither VA or DAV are viable options.

Tele-Emergency Care

- Telemedicine Program housed in the VISN Clinical Resource Hub
- Will sit downstream from the VA Health Connect (VAHC) call center
- Purpose is to evaluate patients triaged to follow up within 0-2 hours and patients triaged to 911 but decline to call 911 (911 declinations)
- Staffed by emergency department physicians, RN care coordinators and telehealth clinical technicians during the hours of the VAHC call center hours (Monday – Friday 0700-1900, Closed Federal Holidays)
- Patients that need to be seen in person will be referred to ED or UC in either the VA or in the community
- Patients that do not need to be seen in person will be evaluated through the Tele-EC

VA ID Cards

- Many Veteran Health Identification Card's (VHIC) expired in June and July 2024.
- We are averaging 80-85 card renewal requests a day.
- ID cards are not printed in house and will be sent to the Veteran from Atlanta through the mail.
- Veterans may renew their ID cards online themselves or in person at the Eligibility Office in building 38, on campus.
 - Veterans must bring a state issued Driver's License, or Passport, or Federal, State, or local government issued Photo ID that contains their name, address, and DOB to complete the renewal request.
 - Online the Driver's License, or Passport, or Federal, State, or local government issued Photo ID must be scanned in.
- The VHIC card is used internally at Pharmacy and Lab.
 - At the Lab expired ID cards will not pull Veterans lab orders over into the lab system and must be manually entered by staff.
 - At the Pharmacy an expired ID card will work for checking a Veteran in to pick up their prescriptions or for their appointment.

Veterans have up to one year ahead of their expiration date to renew their VHIC.

To apply for a VHIC online go to: <https://eauth.va.gov/accessva/>

We are getting feedback from our Veterans that the online process is challenging, we encourage Veterans to come in person with the proper IDs to Eligibility to assist with their renewal.

Chief Experience Officer Matt Twitchell provided a hands on demonstration of submitting a travel claim

Black Hill Veterans Administration Health Care System: Executive Director/CEO Spencer Mion

VA Black Hills Health Care System Oct 16th 2024

VA Black Hills Census

- Community Living Centers: 52 available beds, HS and FM have a census of 50 (increase of 2 beds in the last month).
- HS DOM: Census of 41. Continue to increase census (34 in Dec. 2023). Average is approx. 50 daily census.

Care In The Community

- Black Hills has 1112 unscheduled consults.
- There are no unscheduled consults >30 days with no activity.
- No consults aged >180 days
- We have a call center so veterans don't have to leave voicemails open from 9-3
- 605-720-6830

Home Health/ Home Based Care Programs

- VA medical staff including Physician Assistants, Registered Nurses, Dietitians, Occupational Therapists, Psychologists, and Pharmacists travel to the homes of Veterans in rural communities.
- Reduced inpatient days by 84%.
- Reduced ER Visits 36.6% and ER admits 44%.
- HBPC Currently serving 298 Veterans (up from 218 in April. 2024)- HBPC has served over 370 Veterans since launch. 81 Veteran currently in Home Health.

PACT ACT FY24

Toxic Exposure Screens (TES)

- Clinical reminders for Nurses and Providers are in place for the assessment of Veterans for their exposure to toxins. Toxic Exposure Screens are being offered through your Primary Care Team. TES is also being done in some Specialty Care areas as well and we continue to expand these screens into other areas of the healthcare delivery system.
- VABHHCS has screened over 16,712 veterans with 40% endorsing at least 1 exposure concern (Burn pit, Agent Orange, radiation). 75% of VABHHCS enrolled Veterans screened.
- 0 Veterans waiting over 30 days for follow-on care (Referral to VBA, registry information)

- PACT Act events have/will be held in RC, Scottsbluff, Pine Ridge, Hot Springs, Cheyenne River, Rosebud, Standing Rock and Fort Meade through Aug. 24.

COMPACT Act

- Veterans Comprehensive Prevention, Access to Care and Treatment. VA funded care for acute Mental Health crisis.
- VA Black Hills has assisted 136 Veterans with coverage under the COMPACT Act since implementation (Jan. 2023). Nationally 63,288 Veterans and former service members have used this benefit providing them with lifesaving care and saving more than \$64 million in health care costs.
- COMPACT ACT Coordinator assigned, Jessica Cornwell MSW.

Travel Claims

Current BTSSS backlog: 1200

Oldest Claim in review is less than 14 days.

*Staff away on leave, possible increase over the next 2 months.

Construction update – Hot Springs

- **PACT AREA UPGRADE**- The AE Renovate Bldg 12 for PACT (HS) . This upgrade will add approx. 6000 sqft to HS Primary Care and allow for same day access for Veterans in HS.
- **CLC Expansion**

Construction updates – Fort Meade

- Renovate Inpatient 113 will consolidate inpatient care (ICU, Med/Surg, and sleep lab).
- The Upgrade MH Lock Ward Bld 148. Increase safety to the area.
- EHRM Infrastructure construction project ongoing. New fiber. New servers.

Dakotas Regional Office: Dakotas Regional Office Director Shawn Bohn

Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Notes

PACT Act

Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022 (PACT) has been signed by the President adding 20 toxic exposure related condition to the presumptives list of Veterans and Survivors.

- Empower VA to deliver benefits to Veterans living with more than 20 toxic exposure-related conditions and to their survivors;
- Make generations of Veterans eligible for VA health care, while increasing care for many more;
- Ensure that every enrolled Veteran receives an initial toxic exposure screening at VA and follow-up screening at least every 5 years;
- Increase VA research on toxic exposure; and
- Give VA tools to hire and retain employees and modernize over 30 facilities.

VBA has received over 2049564 claims since the passage of the law. Decisions are being made as of January 1, 2023. VBA has processed over 1737831 PACT related claims.

Cancer claims are being prioritized for processing due to the potential for terminal illness.

Conditions included as presumptives for PACT for toxic airborne exposures:

These types of cancers:

- Brain cancer
- Glioblastoma
- Respiratory (breathing-related) cancer of any type
- Gastrointestinal cancer of any type
- Head cancer of any type
- Lymphoma of any type
- Lymphatic cancer of any type
- Neck cancer
- Pancreatic cancer
- Reproductive cancer of any type

- Kidney cancer
- Melanoma

These illnesses:

- Asthma that was diagnosed after service
- Chronic rhinitis
- Chronic sinusitis
- Constrictive bronchiolitis or obliterative bronchiolitis
- Emphysema
- Granulomatous disease
- Interstitial lung disease (ILD)
- Pleuritis
- Pulmonary fibrosis
- Sarcoidosis
- Chronic bronchitis
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)

Veterans and survivors are encouraged to submit claims.

[VA Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry - Reports - Public Health](#)

Veterans and survivors are encouraged to submit claims.

PACT Registries: Below is a link to a PACT registries website.

- [VA Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry - Reports - Public Health](#)

PACT Claims: Nation: Pending: 377894 Compl: 1737831 Received: 2049564 Retro: 7.84B
 South Dakota: Pending: 1419 Compl. 6157 Received: 6246 Retro: 31.5 M 81.0%

Grant Rate

Blue Water Navy (Vietnam Agent Orange) Presumptives

<i>Bladder cancer</i>	AL Amyloidosis	Diabetes Mellitus Type 2
Multiple Myeloma		
<i>Hypothyroidism</i>	Chronic B Cell Leukemias	Hodgkin's Disease
Non-Hodgkin's Lymp.		
<i>Parkinsonism</i>	Chloracne	Ischemic Heart Disease
	Parkinson's Disease	
Peripheral Neuropathy	Porphyria Cutanea Tarda	Prostate Cancer
	Respiratory Cancers	

Soft Tissue Sarcomas

For Vietnam Agent Orange Exposure PACT Act new Presumptives:

- Monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance
- High blood pressure

New areas: Any US or Royal Thai military based in Thailand from January 9, 1962 through June 30, 1976, Laos from December 1, 1965 through September 30, 1969, Cambodia at Mimot or Krek, Kampong Cham Province from April 16, 1969 through April 30, 1969, Guam or American Samoa or in the territorial waters off of Guam or American Samoa from January 9, 1962 to July 30, 1980, Johnston Atoll or on a ship that called at Johnston Atoll from January 1, 1972 through September 30, 1977.

VBA Veteran Readiness and Employment Services

Veterans may receive Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) (Formerly known as Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment) services to help with job training, employment accommodations, resume development, and job seeking skills coaching. Other services may be provided to assist Veterans and Servicemembers in starting their own businesses or independent living services for those who are severely disabled and unable to work in traditional employment.

Veterans/Servicemembers can visit the Regional Office in Sioux Falls or visit the following website to learn more and apply for VR&E benefits: <https://www.va.gov/careers-employment/vocational-rehabilitation/>.

Current Regional Office Public Contact/Veterans Readiness and Employment Hours

Regional Office is opened from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday, excluding Federal Holidays. Masks are not required when entering the Regional Office at this time.

- U.S. Congressional Representative Liaison for Senator John Thune – Bruce Jones NSTR
- U.S. Congressional Representative Liaison for Senator Michael Rounds - Rebecca Herman NSTR
- U.S. Congressional Representative Liaison for Representative Dusty Johnson – No Representative

Unfinished Business

- 2024-2025 Officer Election - Secretary - No Nominations
- 2025 Legislation
 - Major Richard Star Act – Letter was written. The President will send immediately to the Council for approval.
 - Educational Benefits

The Council approved supporting the amendment of current law to allow for Resident Active Duty 100% P&T to be added to the list for free tuition.

Handout given on Chapter 35 given.

A bill is being developed by the SDDVA and the Council will work with them on its development

The Council approved to support changing laws to allow for the credit of accredited military service as college equivalency - A review of the American Legion resolution was reviewed. Talking points will be given.

- Legislative Logistics – every organization is to have a member of the Council at these meetings. Each organization will be at the front table of the roundtable to give a 3-5 minute synopsis of priorities of their organizations.

The South Dakota Veterans Council is requesting the participation of elected State Legislators at one of the upcoming Veterans Legislative Roundtable Sessions.

- **Wednesday, November 20th, 2024**, at the Disabled American Veterans Headquarters (DAV) along with the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), 1519 West 51st Street, Sioux Falls, South Dakota at 12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. (CST). Lunch will be served.
- **Thursday, November 21st, 2024**, at American Legion Post 17, 1412 9th Avenue SW, Watertown, South Dakota at 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. (CST). Sandwich, coffee, and cookies will be served.
- **Friday, November 22nd, 2024**, at the American Legion Post 22, Rapid City, South Dakota 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 a.m. (MT). Refreshments provided.
- **Saturday, November 23rd, 2024**, at the Moose Lodge, 910 N. Deadwood, Fort Pierre, South Dakota. 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 a.m. (CST) Sandwich, coffee and brownies will be served.

New Business

On a motion by Bill Flippo (MOPH) and seconded by Terry Paulsen (PVA) to approve \$100.00 for food and refreshments for the legislative roundtable on November 22nd in Rapid City. Discussion. Motion carried.

A Teams meeting is tentatively scheduled for November 14th to review talking points on the two legislative bills. Time is to be determined.

Good of the Order and Closing Comments

Closing Prayer

Treasurer Marty Pennock provided a closing prayer.

Honors to the American Flag and Adjournment

Vice President Arnold rendered honors to the flag.

On a motion by Terry Paulsen (PVA) and seconded by Bill Flippo (MOPH) to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Marty Pennock, Secretary-Treasurer **10/17/24**