



# Progress In Advancing Convention Resolutions

Current Convention Resolutions are posted at [www.vva.org](http://www.vva.org)

## Agent Orange/Dioxin

BY MAYNARD KADERLIK, CHAIR



We hope that with a new presidential administration veterans will be taken care of more quickly. We are grateful for the issues the previous administration resolved. Three presumptives were attached to the NDAA bill, which passed. Veterans must be patient as the VA puts policies into place. It will take time.

What veterans need to do now is file for bladder cancer, Parkinsonism, and hypothyroidism. Veterans should have filed when the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine strongly suggested that the VA Secretary add these conditions to the Agent Orange presumptive list five years ago. Sometime ago we found out by chance that the previous VA Secretary didn't follow the section of the Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2016 (P.L. 114-315) for the children.

Perhaps with a new VA secretary, the law will be adhered to. The VA is already two years behind on performing the required research.

If you haven't filed a VA Form 21-0304 for your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, do so and also check on its progress through your service rep. Perhaps you may have to file again as it may not have been archived at the Denver VA. When you file, send a copy to VVA so we can track it.

Also, keep copies of everything that you file with a certified VSO. You can, through your VSO, check to see if a form is archived in Denver. If not, file again. Work with your VSOs; they are the experts and have ready access to the forms. The proper procedure is to file in person with the child at a VSO office. The VSO then sends the file to a Regional Office to be submitted to the VA. Without doubt, it will be denied as we wait for the VA to move forward with the law, which was not done properly by the previous VA Secretary.

You may have read what polluted messes the abandoned and active military bases across America and abroad are. We will do what we can to resolve those issues. We know very well the long-term effects of these poisons. America needs to clean up God's once-clean earth.

**AO-1 Research on AO Effects:** Three presumptives were enacted and await VA policies to deal with the claims. We will continue to remind the new administration that P.L. 114-115 has yet to be followed on the research for the children.

**AO-2 Agent Orange/Dioxin Children's Registry:** We will continue to encourage veterans and their children to file VA 21-0304 forms for their children.

**AO-4 Agent Orange/Dioxin Guides:** We need to update these guides to include the presumptives recently signed into law. We will continue to supply these guides to veterans and families who attend VVA town halls.

**AO-5 Assure Proper Implementation of the Agent Orange Act of 1991:** The Government Affairs and Agent Orange Committees will work together to establish legislation for research on presumptives as the act recently expired.

**AO-6 Dioxin Disposal Methods:** Two words were added on the disposal methods on bedrock.

**AO-7 Children's Health Care:** VVA Officers, as well as the Agent Orange and Government Affairs Committees, are monitoring P.L. 114-315, which needs to move forward.

**AO-8 Agent Orange/Dioxin Network:** Information is supplied to veterans and their families through VVA's self-help guide at our Leadership Conferences and Agent Orange town hall meetings.

**AO-9 Industrial Manufacturing Processes, Including Papermaking:** This resolution was reworded in 2019.

**AO-10 Ban the Manufacturing, Sale, and Use of 2,4-D and Glyphosate:** This resolution was reworded in 2019. The committee continues to take steps to ban this toxin on the state and federal levels.

**AO-12 National Institute of Environmental Health Services Funding for Research in Vietnam:** The committee continues to work with the agency.

**AO-13 Agent Orange/Dioxin Awareness Month:** The committee encourages states and the federal government to make October Agent Orange/Dioxin Awareness Month.

**AO-14 Hearing Loss Added to the List of Birth Defects Due to Exposure to Agent Orange:** In its town halls the committee hears testimony about hearing loss in veterans' children and grandchildren. When P.L. 114-315 moves forward, this should be dealt with.

**AO-15 Government's Responsibility for Veterans Right to Know:** The committee, advised by Government Affairs, has decided to retire this resolution as it dealt with the SHAD 112 Project shipboard use of chemical warfare. These veterans are now being compensated.

**AO-16 Blue Water Veterans Exposure during the Vietnam War:** These veterans are now being compensated. The

committee has decided to retire this resolution.

**AO-17 Remove One-Year Cut-Off Date of Chloracne, Acute/Subacute Peripheral Neuropathy, and Cutanea Tarda:** This was signed into law on January 2 and will take the VA time to develop a policy.

*The Agent Orange Committee: Maynard Kaderlik, Chair; Michael Demske, Vice Chair; Jack McManus, Vice Chair. Members: John Hargens, John Weiss, Sandie Wilson, Roland Mayhew, Marc McCabe, Dennis Andras, Bruce Dobson, Rossie Nance, and Linda Schwartz, Ph.D. Special Advisers: Tom Owen, Paul Sutton, Jim Doyle, Gerry Wright, John McGinty, Bob Grabinski, Steven House, John Rossie, Herb Worthington, Wes Carter, Betty Mekdeci, Robert Cummings, Sandra Morgan, Ken Holybee, John Wells, Frank Arminio, Carlton Rhodes, Rebecca Patterson, and Mike Beuster. AVVA Special Advisers: Nancy Switzer, Kathy Andras, and Bobbie Morris. Staff Support: Mokie Porter and Rick Weidman.*

## Economic Opportunities

BY FRANK BARRY, CHAIR



The Economic Opportunities Committee has two main goals: The first is to promote meaningful jobs in the private and public sectors, including job preparation and training. The second is to promote veterans in business.

Here is the progress the committee has made on advancing our resolutions.

**E-1 Jobs in the Public Sector:** As part of our advocacy, committee members usually meet yearly with the House Small Business Committee and members of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee on Capitol Hill. Due to the pandemic, we reached out to our congressional leaders virtually. We expressed our concerns and asked for support in ensuring that veterans receive preferences. We continue to lobby the committees to fulfill their legislative promises.

**E-2 Job Training and Other Services:** The committee communicates regularly with the Department of Labor about its training programs, including the Transition Assistance Program, Boots to Business, Veteran Business Outreach Centers, Access to Capital, and One-Stop Shop for Veteran Entrepreneurs. Committee members

support jobs and training by attending job fairs and offering assistance to VVA chapters to publicize resources available to veterans. This past year we have been working virtually and attending online meetings.

**E-3 Veterans in Business:** The committee is working on the national and local levels with the Small Business Administration. In virtual forums the committee learned about the CARES Act, which contains emergency relief resources for American workers and small businesses. We also learned about the Economic Injury Disaster Loan applications and the Paycheck Protection Program. This information has been published in *The VVA Veteran* in our committee reports.

**E-19 A Meaningful Job at a Living Wage:** Members advocate for advancing employment opportunities in the demand occupations and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), which provide long-term career opportunities and a living wage. During this past year's economic downturn our committee has supported the Paycheck Protection Program's efforts to help those who have lost wages. We also supported the National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 6395), which has initiatives to support small technology and industrial businesses.

*The Economic Opportunities Committee: Frank Barry, Chair. Members: Dennis Andras, Larry Carter, Marc Goldschmitt, Victor Klingelhofer, Pete Peterson, and Dave Smith. AVVA Advisers: Sharon Hobbs, Teri Rangel, and Susan Henthorn. Special Adviser: Joe Wynn. Staff Support: Rick Weidman.*

## Government Affairs

No report was submitted.

## Homeless Veterans

BY SANDY MILLER, CHAIR



The Homeless Veterans Committee intends to combine three current resolutions and retire those that have either been completed or reached a point where the committee feels completion is unattainable.

**HV-1 Homeless Veterans as a "Special Needs Population":** The committee will continue work to ensure that homeless

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veterans are recognized as a Special Needs Population.

**HV-6 VA Homeless Grant and Per Diem Funding:** The committee will merge several payment and per diem resolutions into one resolution.

**HV-7 Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program to Remain at the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and Be Fully Funded at \$50M:** The committee will move to retire this resolution after years of unsuccessfully attempting to increase funding.

**HV-8 Support for Continued Funding and Oversight of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development/U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Services (HUD-VASH) Program:** The committee will move to retire this completed resolution.

**HV-10 Continued Funding for “Special Needs” Grants Under the Department of Veterans Affairs Homeless Grants & Per Diem Program:** The committee will move to retire this resolution as no plan to extend or increase this program has been accomplished since its inception.

**HVC-11 The Department of Veterans Affairs to Identify Best Practices Model Addressing Homeless Women Veteran Transitional Residential Treatment Programs Through VA Homeless Grants & Per Diem:** The committee will continue to work on addressing and implementing Best Practice Models for Homeless Women Veteran programs.

**HVC-13 Support for the Missing in America Project:** The committee moves to retire this resolution as it already has been accomplished by many chapters and state councils.

**HVC-14 Support, Oversight, And Accountability of VA Supportive Services for Veteran Families:** The committee will move to retire this resolution as the method of accountability has been established.

*The Homeless Veterans Committee: Sandy Miller, Chair; Thomas Hall, Ph.D., Vice Chair. Members: Kate O’Hare-Palmer, John McGinty, Mike Quilty, Joe McIntyre; Jerry Blum, AVVA President Joanna Henshaw, and Joanne Blum. Staff Support: Sharon Hodge.*

## Membership Affairs

**BY DICK SOUTHERN, CHAIR**



We have some “new” Vietnam veterans. With the enactment on January 5 of the Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 (P.L. 116-315),

veterans who served in Vietnam between November 1, 1955, and February 28, 1961, are now considered Viet-

nam War veterans and are eligible for VA benefits—and to be members of Vietnam Veterans of America. The beginning date had been February 28, 1961. I believe there are about 8,000 veterans from that time period. Ask them to join.

We are losing more members than are joining. The key part of that, however, is that we are getting new members. I bet that you know Vietnam vets who are not VVA members, so invite them to join us as we continue to help veterans and their families. Renew your efforts on the chapter level and personally to recruit new members. Life membership in VVA is a bargain at just \$50. Spread the word.

**M-2 Communication Between VVA’s Organizational Levels:** Because VVA recognizes that open and continuous communication at all levels is necessary for its effective functioning, the national office must reply to all communications from state councils and chapters within five working days, and state councils and chapters must reply to all communications from the national office within ten working days. The Membership Affairs Committee recommends that this resolution be continued.

*The Membership Affairs Committee: Dick Southern, Chair. Members: Sam Brick, Jerry Corrigan, Richard DeLong, James Fleming, Larry Frazee, Dave Humphrey, Andy LeDuc, Richard Lindbeck, John Margowski, Charlie Montgomery, Rex Moody, Bob Pace, Michael Quilty, Carlton Rhodes, John H. Riling III, Ken Rogge, Leonard Smith, John Weiss, and Ted Wilkinson. AVVA Special Adviser: Cecilia Essenmacher. Special Advisers: Bill Meeks, Alphonse Williams, and Priscilla Wiley.*

## Minority Affairs

**BY GUMERSINDO GOMEZ, CHAIR**



I’d like to share the highlights of the past two years. Coming out of the 2019 Convention in Spokane, we were energized by the delegates’ unanimous support of the committee’s res-

olutions.

The ROK resolution that asked for VA health benefits for Korean Vietnam veterans, especially with such issues as PTSD and AO, was introduced by Rep. Gil Cisneros (D-Calif.), along with Ms. Debone, Mr. Gomez, Mr. Kim, Ms. Meng, Mr. Pascrell, and Rep. Judy Chu (D-Calif.). H.R. 5590 was referred to the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs.

This bill will be re-introduced in the new Congress. We will ask VVA members to call upon their legislators to support the bill when it comes out of committee.

Another Minority Affairs Resolution called for equal treatment for the 3.2 million American citizens in Puerto Rico. We are working very closely with Puerto Rico’s Resident Commissioner Jennifer Gonzalez on this issue. I have sent her a copy of VVA Resolution MA-10. Soon we’ll send a letter to VVA members, which they can send to their legislators in support of H.R. 4901, the Puerto Rico Statehood Admission Act.

We also have kept tabs on Native American veterans. In November 2019 we sent committee member Bill Garcia to the Arizona Statewide Tribal Veterans Symposium at the Twin Arrows Casino Resort. He spoke with many Native veterans and explained how VVA could help them.

Marc McCabe is working very hard helping Vietnam War veterans and their families in Puerto Rico. He is also very involved with the Seminole Reservation in Florida, strongly advocating for their veterans benefits.

During the pandemic I have been in daily communication with the committee’s members. We will meet via Zoom to discuss changes to the resolutions that will be presented to the Convention in August.

*The Minority Affairs Committee: Gumersindo Gomez, Chair. Members: Pete Peterson, Francisco Ivarra, Kerwin B. Stone, Joe Jennings, Melvin M. Morrel, Bill Garcia, Jorge Pedroza, Charles Odom, Keep J. Kim, and Nina Schuffel.*

## POW/MIA Affairs

**BY GRANT T. COATES, CHAIR**



In accordance with VVA Convention Resolution P-7, here is the annual report of the Prisoner of War/Missing in Action (POW/MIA) Committee:

**PM-3 Declassification of Information and Diligent Effort:** The POW/MIA Committee monitors the actions of the National Declassification Center. The NDC has several military commands and secret correspondence that have completed declassification processing.

**PM-4 Americans Missing in Laos and Cambodia:** Efforts continue for better relations between Laos and Cambodia to further recovery missions in those countries.

**PM-7 Possibility of Live POW/MIAs, and Facilitating the Return of Those Who Remain in Southeast Asia:** VVA has formally acknowledged the possibility of live Americans being left in Southeast Asia at the end of the Vietnam War, and elsewhere worldwide, as a result of later military operations and war. By definition of the resolution, until all known missing in action

from the Vietnam War are accounted for and returned, no change to the resolution is foreseen.

**PM-8 Fullest Possible Accounting of POW/MIAs in Vietnam:** The POW/MIA Committee continues to receive timely information from the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Accounting Agency and other organizations regarding accountability of the missing in action from the Vietnam War. All identified missing in action names are immediately announced through the media. For several reasons, including wishes of the families, DOD announcements are often delayed beyond identification dates.

**PM-11 Honoring All Returned POWs, and Giving Recognition of American Civilians Held as POW/Interned During World War II:** VVA urges all chapters and state councils to seek opportunities to honor local former POWs and their families. VVA desires that Congress enact legislation to formally recognize the sacrifices of these individuals.

VVA commends the extraordinary service rendered by public servants, military personnel, and citizens who have devoted their lives, vocation, time, and personal resources to resolving the issue of prisoners and missing from the Vietnam War and other conflicts.

**PM-13 Public Awareness and Education on the POW/MIA Flag:** By definition of the resolution: VVA encourages and supports compliance with U.S. Public Law 116-67, known as The National POW/MIA Flag Act. The bill changes the days on which the POW/MIA flag is required to be displayed at specified locations to all days on which the U.S. flag is displayed.

VVA further resolves to continue efforts to educate public officials and others on the history and meaning of the POW/MIA flag and its proper display under Public Law 116-67.

VVA recognizes that any official VVA function where the national colors are displayed should include the POW/MIA flag; it shall be posted or flown to the immediate left of the national colors. All other flags used in the display shall be flown to the left of the POW/MIA flag following published guidelines for positioning protocol.

**PM-14 Forever POW/MIA Stamp:** As of February 4, 2021, no member of Congress had introduced legislation regarding the Perpetual POW/MIA Stamp Act. A bill must be passed by both the House and Senate in identical form and then be signed by the President in order to become law.

**VI-1 The Veterans Initiative, A National VVA Effort on Vietnam’s Missing in Action:** In an effort to receive more information regarding the Vietnamese missing in action from the Vietnam War, the Veterans Initiative Program launched a new informational request advertisement in 2016 titled, “Were You There?” in *The Veteran*. In 2015 “The Veterans Initiative Needs



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Your Help” announcement was placed on the VVA website’s POW/MIA page at [www.vva.org/Committees/POW\\_MIA](http://www.vva.org/Committees/POW_MIA). Several eyewitness reports have been submitted to the committee for investigation. The end result of the veteran-to-veteran collaboration between VVA and Vietnamese organizations, we hope, will be the return of American MIAs.

**VI-2 Scope of the Veterans Initiative:** VVA reaffirms the primary mission of the Veterans Initiative to achieve the fullest possible accounting of all POW/MIAs in Vietnam and supports expanding the mission to include Southeast Asia.

*The POW-MIA Affairs Committee: Grant T. Coates, Chair. Members: Terry Courville, Richard DeLong, Pattie Dumin, Skip Hochreich, Dennis Howland, Larry Matika, and Ted Wilkinson. Special Advisers: VVA Staff Liaison, Sharon Hodge; AVVA, Kaye Gardner and Tim Von Bon; National League of Families, Susie Stephens. VVA Staff Adviser to the VI Program, Mokie Porter; Special Advisers, Gary Jones and Bill Duker.*

## PTSD & Substance Abuse

**BY THOMAS C. HALL, PH.D., CHAIR**



Over the past year as the COVID pandemic raged, the PTSD/SA Committee continued to hold virtual meetings and work hard to build and strengthen resources and advocacy efforts. That included grassroots initiatives, such as bringing veterans’ concerns to VA Medical Center directors and contacting members of Congress to hold the VA accountable for implementing legislation tied to our legislative agenda. Committee members and VVA members across the country continue to be active where mental health and substance abuse issues overlap.

With the passage of The Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Act and the COMPACT Act in 2020, accountability—which has always been a priority of this committee—is the watchword this year as VA implements the programs, pilots, research, and other requirements of these mental health omnibus bills.

In 2020 the in-person advocacy VVA is so well known for has taken a back seat to virtual advocacy, with all its inherent limitations. At the beginning of last year, I was appointed to the federal advisory board addressing veterans’ readjustment. Over the course of the year we had several virtual meetings to address concerns about counselor burnout and turnover, and to ensure planning is in place to support continuing-care groups once it is safe to hold in-person

sessions again. This issue will continue to be a high priority.

Though our in-person workshops on PTSD, secondary PTSD, suicide prevention, and substance use disorder were suspended due to the pandemic, several workshops did take place last year via Zoom. Plans are being developed for more virtual workshops in 2021.

The committee will continue to advocate for policy change in the VA that requires a psych autopsy to be completed after a veteran dies by suicide. The goal is to look for anything that might tell us about signs to look for when a veteran is considering suicide.

Despite the pandemic, members were still able to work with VVA’s Veterans Against Drugs Committee on the National Drug Take Back program, which is sponsored by DEA. This initiative works to get unused and out-of-date medications out of our medicine cabinets, refrigerators, kitchen cabinets, and nightstands.

The committee recognized several veterans for the work they do on PTSD and substance abuse by awarding them the VVA Achievement Medal. In the coming year we also can recognize good work by veterans through the presentation of the PTSD Challenge Coin. The coins are available for purchase through Mokie Porter at the national office. Call 800-882-1316, ext. 146, or email [mporter@vva.org](mailto:mporter@vva.org)

The committee is aware that many issues still need attention. What I have shared here are just some of the key priorities that need to be addressed in the coming year. Please keep the committee informed of any concerns you have regarding PTSD, mental health issues, and substance use disorder among veterans. The committee needs your input now more than ever to understand and address the novel challenges the

pandemic presents. Grassroots initiatives are the backbone of advocacy.

Our congressional representatives and VA service providers must be held accountable when they fail. It is also important to recognize those who are providing good service to veterans. Legislators and those responsible for implementing legislation and policies aimed at helping veterans must be held accountable to ensure that all veterans come all the way home and have a shot at success in their post-military lives.

*The PTSD & Substance Abuse Committee: Thomas C. Hall, Ph.D., Chair. Members: Dan Stenvold, Kate O’Hare-Palmer, Sandy Miller, Thomas Brown, John Margowski, John McGinty, Ken Rose, Charles R. Montgomery, and Charles Stapleton. Advisers: AVVA, Nina Schloffel; HGVA, Maureen Elias.*

## Public Affairs Committee

**BY DENNIS HOWLAND, CHAIR**



The pandemic continues to control our individual and organizational activities. It has captured the attention of everyone at every level of VVA. It has certainly brought us a lot of virtual meeting experience.

To some, the pandemic seems to make it nearly impossible to recruit or participate in community programs. However, we must continue to work hard. When things return to normal we will have a lot of catching up to do. It is important to keep in touch with your community and school

contacts and everyone who connects with your VVA projects. You can do this safely with phone calls and emails to show that you are concerned and to let them know that, despite everything, VVA is prepared to help.

Special observance days in 2021 will present challenges, as will doing our work serving veterans while dealing with the virus restrictions. I am confident that many of you will find safe ways to get this done. I’m sure each of you can call upon your state councils and chapters for help. It is who we are. We can get much accomplished even while following the required precautions and social distancing.

I would appreciate hearing how you have continued your community involvement. Email me at [dennishowland46@hotmail.com](mailto:dennishowland46@hotmail.com) or [dhowland@vva.org](mailto:dhowland@vva.org). Let us pray things get back to normal very soon. I believe they will.

The Public Affairs Committee welcomes your input on VVA’s website, [www.vva.org](http://www.vva.org). We can only recommend changes to benefit members if we know there is a problem.

I have reached out to the Public Affairs Committee members and advisers for input regarding our current and active resolutions. No committee meetings have been held, so it has been difficult. The dispositions of Public Affairs Resolutions are not changed much. Based on committee members’ input, we have chosen to keep all resolutions active. In compliance with Convention Resolution P-7, the following update is provided to the membership on the committee’s efforts to advance the 2019 Convention Resolutions.

**P-1 Community Service:** Vietnam Veterans of America encourages chapters to take the initiative to make a better community for everyone and serve as a focal point to promote the interrelationship between Vietnam veterans and the community. To accomplish this mission, VVA at the national, state, and local levels should publish useful materials, including national and state resolutions, through the media to communicate our message.

The Public Affairs Committee emphasizes through its magazine column the importance of using VVA resource materials in community activities. Website materials and available resources are often pointed out and recommended for chapters and state councils to use as public presentation and recruiting tools. The committee encourages all members to become familiar with the VVA website. It contains an incredible amount of information, including the organization nomination forms and awards that can assist with honoring chapters and members.

Chapters are encouraged to take the initiative to make a better community for everyone and serve as focal points to promote relationships between Vietnam veterans and the community. Examples include

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## March 31... Maybe

VVA members who intend to run for national office must submit a Letter of Intent to the Elections Committee by March 31. Those who wish to propose an amendment to VVA’s Constitution must have it postmarked by March 31. Same’s true for those who wish to bring a resolution before the delegates to VVA’s twentieth National Convention: The deadline is March 31.

Maybe.

The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown a monkey wrench into this year’s Convention plans. Several options are being considered by the Officers and the Board of Directors, including holding a virtual Convention or else simply delaying the entire process.

For the present, assume that the clock is ticking and you must act immediately. But check the Convention Committee Reports in the March/April issue at [www.vvaveteran.org](http://www.vvaveteran.org) for up-to-the-minute instructions.



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assisting in fundraisers for community projects, sponsorship of Agent Orange town halls, and coordinating with other veterans' organizations to better serve all veterans. We continue to encourage chapters to share their ideas and programs with the rest of the organization.

**P-2 Children's Welfare:** VVA calls upon Vietnam-era veterans and their families, through financial and personal contributions, to act responsibly to ensure protection and development of infants and children in the United States and throughout the world. The committee continues to encourage participation in organizations that benefit infants and children such as Boys and Girls Club volunteering, adult counseling in Scouting programs, and working to help families understand new legislation regarding care of the descendants of Vietnam veterans. We recommend participating in the Eagle Scout Medal program.

**P-3 Chapter Involvement with Educational Institutions on Teaching the Vietnam War:** VVA encourages the balanced, comprehensive teaching of the Vietnam War at all educational levels, including the Department of Defense education system. Chapters are encouraged to establish ties with local schools and colleges for the purpose of making qualified individuals available to help teach the Vietnam War. State councils and chapters are asked to participate in Vets-In-Classrooms programs.

Even with the pandemic I receive an average of five requests per week for veterans to visit schools either by Zoom or in person. State Council Presidents are commended for their support of these requests as I pass them along.

This interaction between students, teachers, and Vietnam War veterans permits a personal understanding of the war. The committee continues to place emphasis on participation with educational institutions with the VVA JROTC Medal and Ribbon and Eagle Scout programs developed by the Public Affairs Committee, and we endorse the POW/MIA Committee's Remember Our Warriors bracelet program.

Under normal circumstances, the weeks leading up to Vietnam War Veterans Day, Veterans Day, and Memorial Day are great times for contacting schools and offering to discuss our war experiences with young people. We recommend virtual classroom visits where possible. They work very well.

**P-4 Regulation of Certain Activities at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial:** VVA recommends that the National Park Service prohibit the use of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., and adjacent areas for press conferences, politically motivated actions or statements, and all conduct not in keeping with its purpose as a place of healing, remembrance, and acknowledgment of the costs of the Vietnam War. Furthermore, VVA urges the National Park Service to continue its vigilance concerning vendors and solicitors in the immediate vicinity of the memorial and ensure an atmosphere of reverence and respect for those honored there.

mediate vicinity of the memorial and ensure an atmosphere of reverence and respect for those honored there.

**P-5 Endorsement for Participation in Local Environmental Efforts:** VVA encourages chapters and state councils to network with other groups and participate in efforts to minimize the adverse effects of toxic and nuclear waste dumping, collect hazardous home waste, general recycling efforts, and home site energy efficiency.

Chapters and state councils have held discussions about the use of toxic chemicals and the storage and underground disposal of the millions of gallons of these chemicals. *The VVA Veteran* has published articles on the effects of toxic chemicals on our military men and women. The issue of contaminated water at military installations is especially pressing. Members are staying abreast of research on the proper disposal at military installations and chemical storage facilities.

**P-7 Requirement to Report Progress on All Currently Approved Convention Resolutions, at Least Annually:** The Public Affairs Committee continues to support the requirements of this resolution, as evidenced by this report. The committee continues to update its resolutions and encourages other committees to follow this resolution.

**P-8 The Vietnam Veterans Memorial:** VVA calls upon its members and associates to support and maintain their commitment to conserve the legacy, respect, and honor that The Wall has come to mean to Vietnam veterans and their families.

**P-12 Public Awareness for Veterans Benefits Campaign:** The Public Affairs Committee will do whatever is necessary to include at least \$20,000 in the annual budget to advertise to the membership and to publicize the availability of veterans benefits and how to claim them. Further, the membership instructs the leadership to encourage chapters to publicize the availability of service officers to file claims. The Public Affairs Committee continually emphasizes the need for chapters and state councils to stay abreast of changing veterans' benefits and procedures for filing claims. Additionally, we encourage the use of communications tools to keep members in the know as veterans benefits legislation changes.

**P-13 Gold Star Mothers National Monument:** VVA applauds Gold Star Mothers and supports the development and construction of an American Gold Star Mothers National Monument in Washington, D.C. Chapters and state councils are encouraged to reach out to Gold Star Mothers in their communities and to help with fundraising for the monument. VVA chapters work with Gold Star Mothers chapters in ceremonies and community events and support the national Gold Star Mothers Family Monument.

*The Public Affairs Committee: Dennis Howland, Chair. Members: Ken Rogge, Pattie Dumin, Tom Brown, Leslie DeLong, Chuck Renevier, Bob Grabinski, Dave Simmons, Dan Stenvold, Grant Coates, and Richard DeLong. Stenvold, Coates, and Richard DeLong serve as the National VVA Awards Committee. AVVA Advisers: Tim Von Bon and Fran Davis. Staff Support: Mokie Porter, Michael Keating, Wes Guidry, and Marc Leepson.*

## VA Voluntary Service

BY KEN ROSE, NATIONAL REP



The Department of Veterans Affairs has announced a name change: VAVS will now be the Center for Development and Civic Engagement.

There are three key work streams in the title. **Voluntary Service** remains the foundation of the system. **Philanthropic Engagement** is in keeping with current trends to bring in new contacts in addition to the traditional veterans sources, which continue to shrink. **Partnership Solutions** refers to encouraging new groups—corporate and non-profit—to work with the VA in fiscal and other support roles.

For the time being each VAMC can use the new name or continue with VAVS. I will use VAVS because it best covers VVA's involvement.

This is an important time for VVA's Representatives and Deputies. Although meetings cannot be held in person, it is still critical that they participate. VAVS meetings are virtual, so attending them is easy. If you have Internet, you can join a meeting and see and hear staff provide updates. If not, you can listen in on your phone. The Volunteer office will provide you with the phone number to call. Either way, you will be able to receive valuable information to bring back to your chapter and include in your newsletters.

When you attend a virtual meeting be sure that the volunteer staff has your name. Your attendance helps VVA. If you are a volunteer at a VAMC or clinic, consider becoming a Representative.

Another important source of information at the VA is the Veteran Advisory Committee. Every VAMC has one, and VVA should be represented at these committee meetings. The Voluntary Service office or the Community Affairs office can help you with that.

The VA has administered a million COVID-19 vaccine doses to veterans and health care workers in a month and a half. CBOCs are starting to receive COVID vaccines. If the ones in your area have not received theirs yet, they soon will.

You must be enrolled in VA Health Care to get the vaccine. Priority began with those 75 and older and veterans 65 or older with co-morbidity. Veterans who have not used the VA and have done well in their careers are subject to a means test.

Caregivers who are part of the VA Care Givers Support Program can receive the COVID vaccine through the VA—if they meet certain criteria.

January 30 marked the 75th anniversary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, formerly the Veterans Administration. The VA academic affiliation program has provided training to nearly 70 percent of the country's physicians.

If you have any questions, I can be reached at [krose@vva.org](mailto:krose@vva.org) Stay safe and wear your masks.

## Veterans Against Drugs

BY DAVE SIMMONS, CHAIR



The Veterans Against Drugs Committee does not have any Resolutions; however, we would like to share a success story about the message and core values that VAD provides to young

people in our communities.

Sometimes it is hard to know if our Anti-Drug and Anti-Violence Programs are having a lasting impact on the young people we work with and the communities where we present our programs. Recently I heard from a young woman who was a part of the first VAD program in impoverished southern West Virginia. The drug trade thrives in the coal fields.

Her father was incarcerated, her disabled mother tried to hold the family together, and her older stepbrother was sexually abusing her. Marijuana became her crutch, and her problems seemed to drift away.

Following her father's release from prison, the family moved to another state. She received no emotional support and her stepbrother remained in the household. Marijuana was not helping, so she turned to heroin, which was easily available. When she told her parents about her stepbrother, they didn't believe her, and she ran away. Living on the streets, she drifted into a life of drugs and violence.

She lived with older men who fed her drug habit. They stole to get anything they could sell to buy drugs. Two boyfriends were caught and put in jail, and she knew it was only a matter of time before she would get arrested.

Meantime, her parents moved back to Huntington, W.Va.. She called them and they told her to come home. Of all the places in West Virginia, Huntington has the most drug activity. She returned home and started rehab. After many years on heroin



# VVA Annual Committee Reports

and a few run-ins with the law, it was hard to break the drug habit. But with support from law enforcement and the rehab center, she started on the right path.

She told me she has almost completed the rehabilitation program. We talked about VAD. She wanted me to know that she had been through a lot, but the core values she learned were a part of her determination to get drug free and start her life again.

## JUST ASK

Just Ask, a nonprofit educational initiative, was launched in 2013 as a public outreach and awareness campaign to address the problem of human trafficking, which is part of VAD's mandate. Many people are unaware of human trafficking or believe it is not happening in their communities. Trafficking can happen anywhere. Victims come from all genders, races, ethnicities, religions, and socioeconomic classes. They are lured, through fraud or coercion, into lives of labor or commercial sexual exploitation. This dehumanization continues to thrive in our country.

The FBI and more than two dozen partner agencies recently recovered 33 missing children from Los Angeles as part of Operation Lost Angels. Of the children rescued, eight were being sexually exploited, and two were recovered multiple times while on the "track," a term for a location where commercial sex trafficking occurs. One child had been kidnapped by a noncustodial parent. Some of the children were rescued after being arrested for violating probation or for robbery and other misdemeanors. A suspected human trafficker was also arrested.

According to the FBI, some children involved in trafficking may not even realize they're being trafficked. Others return to trafficking voluntarily or by force. Sometimes victims go missing for long periods of time before they're discovered. Some have been taught to think that sex trafficking is the only way they can survive on the streets.

As many as 300,000 American children may be at risk of commercial sexual exploitation. The odds increase if children are homeless, missing, refugees, or migrants

## REDUCING DRUG QUANTITIES

U.S. Rep. Alex Mooney (R-W.Va.) says his bill, H.R.4599, The Reducing Unused Medications Act, would allow pharmacists to partially fill a patient's prescription, thereby reducing the amount of unused medication in the population. Often, drug abusers steal unused prescriptions from family and friends.

Drug abuse isn't just about street drugs. Aside from marijuana, legal medicines are the most abused drugs in the U.S. Over-the-counter and prescription drugs can help and heal us, but some can be addictive and dangerous. Drug abuse among teenagers

has become a bigger problem for families since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease. Smoking, vaping, using meth, or misusing opioids can have an impact on the lungs. People whose lungs have been affected by drug use may be at higher risk of serious complications from COVID-19.

*The Veterans Against Drugs Committee: Dave Simmons, Chair; Pattie Dumin, Vice-Chair. Members: Ted Wilkinson, Richard DeLong, Herb Worthington, Rodney Farley, Carton Rhodes, Adolph Gardner, Ray Bates, Bernard Kenan, Dominick Yezzo, Terry Courville, Charlie Montgomery, Henry Urioste, John Weiss, and Allen Manual. AVVA Advisers: Elaine Simmons, Patsy Chin, Felicea Catapano, Betty Pike, Margaret Wojciechowicz, Kaye Gardner, Diane Nicholson, Kathy Andras, Deborah Williams, and Don Jones as AVVA Special Adviser. Special Advisers: Mara Boggs and Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.). Staff Support: Deborah Johnson.*

## Veterans Benefits

BY JOHN H. RILING III, CHAIR



The Veterans Benefits Committee met January 12 to discuss the committee's resolutions. They were reviewed and the committee supported the following actions:

- VB-1:** To continue
- VB-3:** To be revised by Greg Nembhard, VSO Program and Policy Manager of the Veterans Benefits Program
- VB-5:** Sent to the VVA Government Affairs Committee
- VB-6:** Sent to the Government Affairs Committee
- VB-9:** To be revised and merged with VB-10 and 11
- VB-10:** Retired to 9
- VB-11:** Retired to 9
- VB-12:** Revised by the committee
- VB-13:** Revised by the committee
- VB-16:** Retire
- VB-27:** To continue
- VB-28:** Sent to Government Affairs
- VB-29:** To continue
- VB-30:** To continue and send a copy to Government Affairs
- VB-31:** To continue and add modernization and oversight for Compensation & Pension

Committee meetings will follow for VB-12 & 13.

*The Veterans Benefits Committee: John H. Riling III, Chair; Joseph Jennings III, Vice Chair/Secretary. Members: Gene Crego, Chuck Byers, Perry Melvin, Pete Peterson, John Margowski, John Weiss, John McGinty, Marc McCabe, Phil Smith, Gary*

*Estermyer, Dick Southern, Gerald Corrigan, Greg Pauline, Bob Grabinski, Gumsindo Gomez, Phillip Smith, and Rex Moody. AVVA: Joanna Henshaw and Kaye Gardner. Subcommittees: Grant Review- John Weiss, Pete Peterson, and Gerald Corrigan; VSO Grievance- Joe Jennings, Dick Southern, and John Margowski; Strategic Planning- Marc McCabe, Chuck Byers, and Gene Crego.*

*The VB Committee has worked with the VVA VB staff. The committee has been advised by all VB staff concerning the issues facing veterans with the VA. Special Advisers are VP Tom Burke, Director Felicia Mullaney, and VB staff members Greg Nembhard and Alec Ghezzi. The VB staff are Elaine Chaney, Fatmata Conteh, Claire Corsey, Justin Huber, Dylan Goll, Malkis Saunders, Kenneth Bouy, Yolanda Harris, Paula Tuero, and Danielle Fischer.*

## Veterans Health Care

BY CHUCK BYERS, CHAIR



The Veterans Health Care Committee met on February 10 via Zoom. We agreed to recommend the following changes to the Health Care Resolutions adopted at the 2019 National Convention in Spokane.

**HC-2 Veterans Health Care:** To be added and renumbered under Resolved: "Community Care criteria and referrals be appropriately funded in a timely fashion for veterans' access to care when needed under the MISSION Act of 2018."

**HC-6 Military Health Care:** No changes.

**HC-7 Participation in the Process of Accrediting VA Medical Centers:** To be added under Resolved, paragraph one: "Encourages chapters and state councils to become familiar with accreditation standards currently used by JACHO and CARF and the VA's STAR Report."

**HC-9 Hours of Operation of VA Medical Facilities:** The committee recommends retiring the Resolution as the VA has met the criteria.

**HC-10 Department of Veterans Affairs Research:** No changes; continue Resolution.

**HC-11 Testing for Hepatitis C:** The committee recommends retiring the Resolution because the VA has established a protocol for testing Hep C.

*The Veterans Health Care Committee: Chuck Byers, Chair; Gene Crego, Vice Chair. Members: William Garcia, Thomas Hall, Ph.D., Maynard Kaderlik, Roland Mayhew, Sandy Miller, Kate O'Hare-Palmer, Michael Patrick Quilty, Kerwin*

*Stone, and Sandie Wilson. Marsha Four and Linda Schwartz, Ph.D., Special Advisers to the President. Staff Support: Dr. Artie Shelton and Rebecca Patterson.*

## Veterans Incarcerated and in the Justice System

BY DOMINICK YEZZO, CHAIR



The coronavirus has most inmates on lockdown or limited lockdown. There is limited or no visiting. During lockdowns incarcerated veterans suffer from the loss of counseling and cell-block

programs.

Incarcerated veterans endure as they wait for small favors from the Departments of Corrections. The COVID pandemic has affected all of society, but especially these veterans. Inmates live in small, closed spaces. They share dining rooms and bathrooms.

Chapter 559 at the Grafton Correctional Institution in Ohio reports that Sgt. Ivan Roberts, inmates Modesto Garcia and Dominick Hudick, and most of the men in the veterans ward contracted the virus. Several were transported by ambulance to the Ohio State University Wexler Medical Center. One veteran, a Marine named James Rivers, died.

The Veterans Incarcerated and in the Justice System Committee asks that you remember them all. We fought together.

*The Veterans Incarcerated and in the Justice System Committee: Dominick Yezzo, Chair; Larry Frazee, Vice Chair; and Raymond Pawlicki, Secretary. Members: Tony D'Aleo, Mike Bousher, Gary Estermyer, Tom Haberkorn, Ben Humphries, Gary Newman, Kate O'Hare-Palmer, and Dave Simmons. AVVA Advisers: Casey Farrell and Don Jones.*

## Women Veterans

BY KATE O'HARE-PALMER, CHAIR



The Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D., Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020, which included the Deborah Sampson Act, resolved some parts of our resolutions dealing with medical treatment, women veteran program managers, women veterans research, and benefits. We welcome

*continued on page 12*



## VVA Annual Committee Reports

the positive work in Congress and look forward to monitoring the results this next year. Below are highlights of some of the Women Veterans Committee Resolutions.

**WV-2 Medical Treatment of Women Veterans:** The committee continues to work with other veterans service organizations to identify, quantify, and review the areas of most concern for women veterans in the VA. The anticipated growth of the number of women veterans should be considered in all strategic plans, facility construction and utilization, and human capital needs. There have been reproductive health care expansions in programs but more fertility workups and fertility solutions regardless of marital status need to be included.

Sexual trauma care needs to be readily available in the VA health care system to all veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserves. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs needs to conduct a nationwide analysis of the need for VA programs that treat and rehabilitate women veterans with drug and alcohol dependency. Pilot program findings and conclusions should be submitted to the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees. The VA Caregiver Expansion Bill has opened up accessibility for Vietnam veterans, and information for veteran families is being re-

ported at the national and local levels. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/07/31/2020-15931/program-of-comprehensive-assistance-for-family-caregivers-improvements-and-amendments-under-the-va>

**WV-3 Support for Women Veterans:** VVA continues to help women veterans in outreach and identification and in developing women-veteran-friendly support and positive recognition. We are working with the Center for Women Veterans on health care and benefit needs for senior women veterans. VVA's Women Veterans Honor Coin was a great success, and we now have lapel pins with the same image. Past resolutions for creating newer apps for women veterans have been developed by the VA with positive feedback.

**WV-5 Women Veterans Research:** We agree with Rep. Julia Brownley (D-Calif.), who is working on new legislation that looks into a continued study of the relationship of toxic exposures during military training and service to infertility of veterans. We also need continued comprehensive evaluation of suicide among women veterans, including rates of both attempted and completed suicides, and risk factors such as co-morbid diagnoses, substance

abuse, history of sexual trauma or sexual harassment, harassment, bullying, intimate partner violence, unemployment, deployment, and homelessness.

**WV-8 Military Sexual Trauma:** The Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs acknowledged sexual trauma as a crime under the Uniform Code of Military Justice in the Defense Authorization Act of 2005. The Military Justice Improvement Act of 2014 was enacted with hopes of solving these injustices. The rates of military sexual trauma continue to increase. There remains gross neglect in the command structure. Programs such as the Sexual Assault and Prevention Response Office and Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention have not helped.

We have asked for years for the creation of a separate and independent office to address such crimes as a way to remove barriers to reporting, and providing additional protection and safety for the victims. Our committee resolves that the House Armed Services Committee ensures that penalties for military sexual trauma under the Uniform Code of Military Justice are enforced in all branches of the military. We request that the congressional Veterans Committees examine, share, and expand the Ft. Hood independent review guidelines and rec-

ommendations to DOD to include all military facilities. There should be more Victim Advocates, comprised of civilian and uniformed personnel, at all military installations. This past year has seen an incredible array of government officials undermining sexual assault claims in their agencies. These government officials should be removed from their positions if found guilty of such actions.

*The Women Veterans Committee: Kate O'Hare-Palmer, Chair; Sandy Miller, Vice Chair. Members: Marsha Four, Dottie Barickman, Thomas Hall, Ph.D., Sandie Wilson, Frank Arminio, John McGinty, Chuck Byers, and Gene Crego. Special Advisers: Beverly Stewart, Rebecca Patterson, Lee Jackson, Linda Blankenship, Jennifer Wilson, Linda Schwartz, Ph.D., Patti Ehline, and Cheryl Van Syckle. AVVA Adviser: Fran Guevremont. Staff Support: Sharon Hodge. ■*

### Public Affairs Resolution P-7

Resolved, That: Vietnam Veterans of America requires that all national committees and task forces report at least annually in The VVA Veteran on actions taken which further the implementation of currently active Convention resolutions.



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