



Vietnam Veterans of America

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www.vva.org

A Not-For-Profit Veterans Service Organization Chartered by the United States Congress

Vietnam Veterans of America National Board of Directors Meeting April 13, 2018 Approved by Board

President John Rowan called to order the meeting of Vietnam Veterans of America National Board of Directors on Friday April 13, 2018, at 9:09 am, at the Double Tree by Hilton in Silver Spring, MD. National Treasurer Wayne Reynolds delivered the opening prayer which was followed by a moment of silence and the Pledge of Allegiance.

The National Secretary conducted the roll call of the National Board of Directors. Present were:

John Rowan, President	Bob Grabinski	Felix Peterson
Marsha Four, Vice President	Skip Hochreich	Dave Simmons
Bill Meeks, Secretary	Sharon Hobbs *	Dick Southern
Wayne Reynolds, Treasurer	Francisco Ivarra	Dan Stenvold
Dottie Barickman	Allen Manuel	Kerwin Stone
Tom Burke	John Margowski	Sandie Wilson
Spence Davis	Sara McVicker	
Richard DeLong	Charlie Montgomery	
Gumersindo Gomez	Rex Moody	

** AVVA President is a non-voting member of the National Board of Directors*

Present: Joseph A. Sternburg, CFO

Excused: Ted Wilkinson and Father Philip Salois

Secretary Meeks conducted roll call of the State Council Presidents. Present were:

Alabama	Present	Nebraska	Present
Alaska	Absent	Nevada	Present
Arizona	Present	New Hampshire	Absent
Arkansas	Absent	New Jersey	Present
California	Present	New Mexico	Present
Colorado	Present	New York	Present
Connecticut	Present	North Carolina	Present
Delaware	Absent	North Dakota	Present

Florida	Present		Ohio	Present
Georgia	Present		Oklahoma	Present
Idaho	Present		Oregon	Present
Illinois	Absent		Pennsylvania	Present
Indiana	Present		Puerto Rico	Absent
Iowa	Absent		Rhode Island	Present
Kansas	Present		South Carolina	Present
Kentucky	Present		South Dakota	Absent
Louisiana	Present		Tennessee	Present
Maryland	Present		Texas	Present
Massachusetts	Present		Utah	Present
Michigan	Present		Vermont	Present
Minnesota	Present		Virginia	Present
Mississippi	Present		Washington	Present
Missouri	Present		West Virginia	Present
Montana	Present		Wisconsin	Present

Preliminary Business

Secretary Meeks submitted the following motions with a second from Treasurer Reynolds:

Motion 1

To seat the Region 2 Alternate Director Ned Foote on the Board at the written request of the Region 2 Director Ted Wilkinson who is absent.

Without objection motion passed.

Yes: 22

No: 0

Non Vote: 1

Not Present: 1

Motion 2

To accept the 2018 April BOD meeting tentative agenda.

Without objection motion passed.

Yes: 23

No: 0

Non Vote: 1

Not Present: 0

Motion 3

To approve the 2018 January BOD Meeting Minutes 1/12/18.

Without objection motion passed.

Yes: 23

No: 0

Non Vote: 1
Not Present: 0

National President/J. Rowan

President Rowan gave a brief verbal report with a copy in the packets.

On January 23rd I attended a meeting of the NYC Veterans Advisory Board and met the new NYC Council Chair of the Veterans Affairs Committee Chaim Deutch.

On January 26-27 Mariann and I traveled to Tioga Downs Casino Hotel to attend the NYSC meeting. This was the first meeting in a new location and it was a big improvement. The casino manager is a friend of veterans and has made a nice donation to the NYSC.

On February 15-16 I went to the Headquarters along with Treasurer Reynolds and finalized some items on a new lease for our offices among other things.

On March 2nd and 3rd I joined the other officers to participate in the Finance Committee's Budget meeting.

On March 6th I travel to DC to present VVA's annual testimony before a joint hearing of the Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committees. I highlighted our concern about the efforts to try and privatize the VA.

On March 23rd Mariann and I attended a dinner by the United War Veterans Council of NYC. The guest of honor was Joe Galloway, who was getting an award the next day.

On March 24th Mariann and I attended the annual NYC Vietnam Veterans Day celebration at the NYC Vietnam Veterans Memorial honoring the 1741 KIAs from NYC. This year they had a reenactment of the "Welcome Home Parade" over the Brooklyn Bridge. Some Vietnam Veterans participated but it was primarily younger veterans who were honoring the Vietnam vets. They included Team Red White and Blue and GoRuck. Both of these organizations are primarily post 9/11 veterans who get involved in community projects. Joe Galloway received the inaugural Patrick Gualtieri Award named after the late Executive Director of the United War Veterans Council.

On April 6-8 I traveled to El Paso for the TX SC meeting. It was great hospitality as usual. Buster Newberry retired as SC President. He got a great send-off.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the April Board meeting.

National Vice President/M. Four

Vice President Four gave a brief verbal report with a copy in the packets.

Activities for this period included the following:

- Committee Chair Meeting: January meeting agenda content included:

- A discussion on the distribution of committee meeting minutes via the BOD minutes.
- A discussion on the preparation of committee FY 19 budgets led by Chair of the Finance Committee. The National Treasurer, spoke about the budget spread sheets.
- The submission of presentations for the Leadership/Education Conference was discussed in regard to presentation content, length of sessions (90 minutes) and slots available (30).
- Next meeting October 2018 BOD meeting.
- Activities
- Traveled to Vietnam January 17 as part of the Veterans Initiative Program.
- Attended and represented VVA at the Award Ceremony for the 2018 National Women's History Project where Dr. Linda Schwartz was one of it Honorees. The 2018 theme is "Nevertheless She Persisted: Honoring Women Who Fight All Forms of Discrimination Against Women." In her acceptance speech she was able to bring forward the issues facing women veterans which seemed to be a topic not often, if ever, mentioned in this arena.
- Attended the Annual VVA Budget meeting for FY19 from March 1st to March 3rd.
- Finalizing the edit, revisions, updates and additions to the VVA Employee Handbook with Samala Parker, Director of Administration and Personnel Services.
- As a member of the American Academy of Nursing's Veteran Committee I was invited to be a member its subcommittee that is planning a upcoming daylong conference entitled "Have you Ever Served: Caring for Veterans and their Families in the Community." It is tentatively scheduled for June 6th in the North room of the Capitol and it is by invitation only. I will assist by moderating a segment in which a diverse group of Veterans will voice their thoughts on this topic.
- I will be attending Memorial Day Ceremonies in Washington and assisting at the VVA membership tent.

National Treasurer/W. Reynolds

Treasurer Reynolds gave a brief report on the FY 19 budget and introduced Jeff Greulich to answer questions and address concerns about the VVA Web Site.

National Secretary/B. Meeks

Secretary Meeks gave a brief verbal reminder to the state councils and chapters about submitting VVA election reports.

Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America/ S. Hobbs

The AVVA Board continues to conduct business and communicate through our online conferencing platform. Officer, Regional, and Committee reports can be read on the AVVA website. (www.avva.org). The Finance Committee and I met in January to complete the proposed 2019 budget. The BOD will be asked to accept it during our April board meeting.

We began online educational sessions for the Board in December. These sessions are geared to upcoming proceedings (i.e. 2018 at-large, state and chapter elections). My intent is to equip the

Regional Directors with the tools and knowledge to be of service to our States and Chapters. I am a firm believer that educational/refresher courses about our policies and procedures and other governing documents must be a part of our Board's commitment at the National level.

April is Chapter Representative and Chapter Officers election month. State Representatives and State Officers will be holding elections between January and June of this year. Representatives and Presidents elected this year will be the Delegates of Record to the AVVA National Convention in 2019.

The AVVA Board and Committees continue to work well together; we are planning the 2018 Leadership and Education Conference with VVA. The VVA Leadership Committee was to meet in Silver Spring in March; however, the meeting was canceled due to the weather. A Secondary PTSD seminar was submitted for a slot on the educational agenda. The AVVA Leadership Development Committee will soon begin meeting online to plan our portion of the 2018 Leadership and Education Conference. We will also hold our Annual Membership Meeting during the Conference.

Our membership reached an all-time high in February.

Our Project Friendship for 2018 is ***LIGHTHOUSE SOCIAL SERVICE CENTER (LSSC)***. An informative flyer will be distributed during the Board meeting. Our goal again this year is \$12,000.

Fran Davis, AVVA Chaplain, continues to work with Father Phil in sending sympathy cards to the families of all reported deceased members of VVA and AVVA. An additional card introducing and explaining the *In Memory Registry* is included with each condolence card.

AVVA will celebrate our 20th anniversary in 2019. We are hoping to incorporate our celebration into the Convention in Spokane, WA.



Sharon Hobbs, AVVA President

Conference of State Council Presidents/R. Moody

CSCP President Moody noted that they were forty-three (43) presidents in attendance. There were several topics of discussion and he introduced Randy Reed who discussed the states who have established state veterans cemeteries. Eligibility is similar to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) national cemeteries and may include residency requirements.

Veterans Benefits Program Director's Report/K. Yoon

Kelsey Yoon introduced the Chair Board of Veterans' Appeals Washington, DC Cheryl L. Mason who spoke about the appeals process.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

April 2018

Kelsey Yoon, Esq.

Director, Veterans Benefits Program

CONTENT

1. Director's Note
2. VBP Activities
3. Notable Achievements
4. People & Staff Changes

APPENDIX

1. Financial Awards by State: December 2017; January 2018
2. Financial Retro Awards by State: January 2018; February 2018; March 2018
3. VSO of the Year 2018 Nomination Information
4. Memorandum: Chapter 18 Benefits Update

1. Director's Note: RAMP & Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017

The VBP continues to stay on top of VA's pilot program, Rapid Appeals Modernization Program ("RAMP"), and developments to the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 ("the Act"). RAMP is currently permitting veterans who have pending appeals to opt-in and have their claims processed through *part* (not all) of the new appeals process. Although RAMP may benefit some claimants, depending on the specifics of their pending claims, the VBP believes that VA is treating RAMP as not a pilot project, but a way to substantially decrease its backlog, at the possible expense to the veteran.

As of March, 28, 2018, VA has mailed out 84,546 invitations nation-wide to claimants asking them to opt-in to RAMP. Thus far, VA reports an opt-in rate of 7.5%. Additionally, as of April 2, 2018, veterans and family members are able to opt-in to RAMP without receiving a notification letter. Notably, when a claimant opts-in to RAMP, all of the claimant's eligible claims (all appeals that have not been yet certified to the Board) will be automatically opted-in to RAMP; a claimant may not choose which claims to opt-in. Although VVA's official position is to recommend that claimants not opt-in at this time, if a claimant desires to opt-in, it is highly encouraged that the claimant work closely with a knowledgeable accredited service officer.

VA continues to tout a high “claim” grant rate of 53% for RAMP claims.¹ Nevertheless, **the overall grant rate by issue is a more modest, lower number of 31%.** In the near future, the Board of Veterans Appeals (“Board”) also plans to start a pilot project, similar to RAMP—this is scheduled to begin around October 2019. The VBP will continue to be heavily involved with the development and implementation of pilot programs and the Act to ensure that veterans and their families are prioritized.

In addition to attending monthly meetings with VA leadership, representing VA at roundtables hosted by Congress members, and providing substantive feedback on forms and processes, the VBP also provides detailed feedback on all available RAMP documents, forms, standard operating procedures, and any unpublished proposed rules for the Act. The VBP continues to zealously advocate for rules and regulations that support a pro-veteran and non-adversarial system.

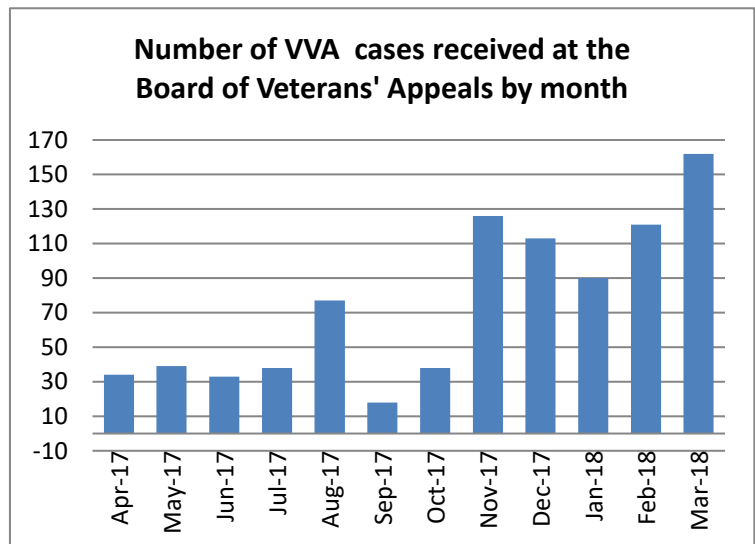
Finally, in order for VVA to ensure that we are properly advising and representing veterans, VVA service officers must continue to stay in the forefront of this new claims process. As such, the VBP continues to support the funding of a mandatory in-person service officer training in January 2019 so when the new claims process comes into effect, our service officers will be able to continue to zealously advocate for veterans and their families. Without adequate training, our service officers will be left in the dark, which will ultimately hurt the veterans and family members we promised to serve.

Sincerely,

Kelsey Yoon
Director, Veterans Benefits Program

2. VBP Activities

The VBP continues to achieve a “win rate” at the Board of Veterans’ Appeals (“Board”) above 73%. From April 2017 until March 2018, 31.6% of VVA cases were granted and 41.9% of its cases remanded.² As anticipated, and similar to other organizations, we are still experiencing a substantial increase in cases added to our backlog at the Board. Since the last report in January 2018, and not including hearing request cases, we have received 373 additional new cases, 162 cases just in March alone. Due to the large influx of cases, unfortunately, VVA cases are still being



¹ Higher-level review (55%) and supplemental review (40%).

² VVA recorded a denial rate of 17.5% and 9.0% of the cases recorded a disposition of “other”.

held up by our office, not VA. As of April 2018, VVA has over 2,000 cases in its own backlog at the Board.

TOTAL APPEALS BACKLOG AT BOARD

LOCATION	Number of cases (Apr '17)	Number of Cases (July '17)	Number of Cases (Oct '17)	Number of Cases (Jan '18)	Number of Cases (Apr '18)
Pending Attorney Review	728	895	886	1014	1273
Pending Travel Board Hearing	205	211	196	205	207
Pending Videoconference Hearing	610	654	659	687	725
Pending Central Office Hearings	15	18	16	19	12
TOTAL VVA BACKLOG AT BOARD	1,558	1,778	1,757	1,925	2,217

Source: VACOLS; Board of Veterans' Appeals

As shown in the table below, VVA continues to file over 100 NODs and over 100 Form 9s each month. Most of these claims will eventually make their way up to the Board. The below data indicates that VVA's benefits program continues to remain highly active at all levels.

VVA Appeals Filed Nationwide (April 2017-February 2018)		
	NODs Filed	Form 9s Filed
Apr	130	112
May	142	103
Jun	127	95
Jul	120	107
Aug	141	131
Sep	127	95
Oct	118	91
Nov	114	119
Dec	Data Unavailable	Data Unavailable
Jan	120	137
Feb	123	105

Source: Veterans Benefits Administration (4/2018)

The VBP Office at the AMO and Board continues to be a high-volume office as we continue to experience an increased workload on almost all aspects.

Correspondence & Visitors Report (2017-2018)												
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Phone Calls	254	161	246	279	293	233	271	289	205	218	177	227
Voice Messages	79	91	60	73	63	53	74	58	55	49	65	91
Emails	476	450	375	388	412	330	379	253	263	291	327	308
Appointment/Walk-In	3	5	0	7	8	8	4	11	11	3	4	8
Mail/Faxes	38	44	76	71	92	62	74	90	87	139	113	92

Source: VetPro (4/1/2018)

Number of Tracked Appealed Claims by E-VSO											
Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
123	122	172	105	132	147	127	157	158	134	111	93

We continue to methodically track substantive appeals nation-wide. For the months of January, February, and March, our E-VSO tracked, on average, over 100 appeals each month.

Rating Decisions Reviewed (VSO Queue)											
Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
82	103	93	143	138	110	15	51	30	29	16	28

Fortunately, the number of

rating decision reviews our office conducted in January, February, and March continue to stay low due to the VBMS update of the “Station of Origin” search feature. Now, our service officers in the field can track, monitor, and check *their* claims, regardless of where they are adjudicated.

3. Notable Achievements



Front (L to R): Whitney Wells, Katherine Ebbesson, Carlie Steiner, Kelsey Yoon

Middle (L to R): Felicia Mullaney, Amy Borgersen, Elaine Chaney, Dee Wallace, Michael Garza, Janelle Hardy
Back (L to R): Homer Richards, Josh Leach, Alec Ghezzi, Alex Rigby, Christina Manning

The VBP Team is busy zealously advocating for the veterans we serve. Some notable accomplishments for this quarter of the VBP Team are highlighted below:

Senior Managing Attorney Alec Ghezzi successfully argued for an earlier initial rating for ***PTSD and entitlement to Individual Unemployability*** (which had not been previously argued before VA). This resulted in a retroactive award of **\$74,052**.

Senior Appeals Attorney Katherine Ebbesson successfully argued for an earlier effective date for ***TDIU***, to October 31, 2008, resulting in an award of **\$44,545** in retroactive pay. In a separate case, after representing the veteran at a hearing, Katherine was able to obtain an earlier effective date of April 9, 2010, for his ***70 percent evaluation for PTSD***, leading to a retroactive award of **\$30,405.73**.

Administrative Assistant Elaine Chaney recently celebrated her ***15 year work anniversary*** with VVA. Elaine continues to be the point person on multiple projects, including recertification training, accreditation issues, updating the service officer website, and ensuring we are maintaining frequent contact with VVA-represented veterans through mailings and phone calls.

National Appeals Attorney Amy Borgersen successfully persuaded the Board that a veteran's ***throat cancer*** was caused by his in-service asbestos exposure in the Navy and not his over 30 years of smoking. This zealous advocacy led to an award of **\$351,426.98** in retroactive benefits. In a separate case, Amy helped a veteran obtain an earlier effective date, from August 2005 to April 1997, for his ***service-connected hearing loss***.

National Appeals Attorney Carlie Steiner successfully argued for service connection for ***pilar cysts and chronic fatigue***. The Veteran received a ***60 percent rating*** back to July 2001 and **\$185,609.60** in retroactive benefits. In a separate case, Carlie was able to persuade the Board to ***advance a case on the docket*** for a veteran suffering from suicidal/homicidal ideation. This is not a criteria for automatic advancement; however, due to Carlie's intervention, the Veteran's case was expedited.

Contract Attorney Joshua Leach, who started his position in January, successfully contended that the effective date for a Veteran's ***service-connected hearing loss*** should be pushed back to August 2012 from September 2017.

National Appellate Attorney Alexandra Rigby successfully persuaded the Board to remand a service connection claim for ***bilateral hearing loss***. In doing so, the Board cited the Informal Hearing Presentation Alex submitted, and specifically, the several studies that support ***the theory of delayed onset of hearing loss***.

National Appellate Attorney Felicia Mullaney worked closely with a veteran's physician to obtain a favorable private medical opinion pertaining to his *TBI residuals*. This medical opinion, provided at no cost to the veteran, should hopefully lead to a favorable decision. Felicia was recently promoted to Deputy Director.

VSO Counsel Whitney Wells submitted an Informal Hearing Presentation to the Board that resulted in a *100% rating for PTSD*. The veteran was awarded retroactive payment of \$173,733.10, with an effective date of November 24, 2009.

National Senior Service Officer Dee Wallace helped a veteran with a 0% rating avoid an appeal by filing a Motion for Reconsideration on December 22, 2017. VA ignored the veteran's private doctor's opinion showing the severity of his condition. Dee pointed this out to VA in her Motion, and VA granted the claim in favor of the veteran. The veteran is now entitled to compensation for *porphyria cutanea tarda*.

4. People & Staff Changes

Janelle Hardy, Administrative Assistant, and Christina Manning, E-VSO, left VVA to pursue other career opportunities in February and March, respectively. We wish them both well with their future career endeavors. In April, we welcomed a new Legal Administrative Assistant, Brenae Fletcher.



Legal Administrative Assistant Brenae Fletcher (left) joins our team with prior veterans benefits experience. Prior to joining VVA, Brenae worked for the Department of Veterans Affairs as a claims processor where she performed initial review of claims, added and removed dependents, and screened claims for initial development action. Brenae also has experience working in several medical clinical settings and has obtained her diploma in medical assisting.

We welcome Brenae to the VVA Benefits team!

Veterans Health Council/Dr. T. Berger

Dr. Berger gave a verbal report.

Government Affairs, Executive Director's Report/R. Weidman

Rick Weidman spoke about where VVA was on our legislative efforts with Congress.

Communication Department/M. Porter

Mokie Porter spoke about the web, social media, news and publications.

COMMUNICATIONS STATISTICS SOCIAL MEDIA, NEWS, PUBLICATIONS

April 3, 2018

SOCIAL MEDIA

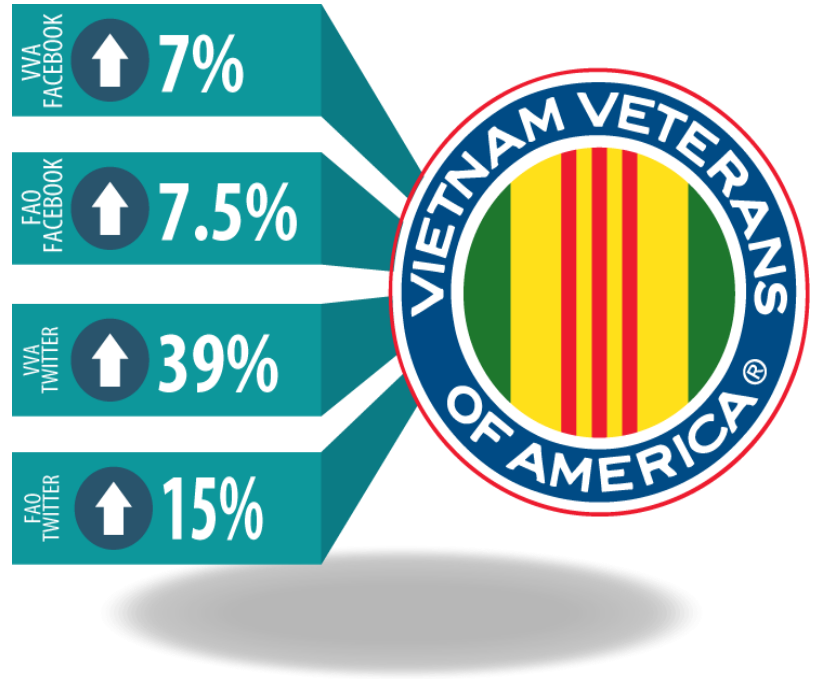
VVA Facebook 2017-2018

The VVA Facebook page continues to gain followers, as measured by “Likes.”

The VVA Facebook has had a **10%** increase in followers in a 12-month period (April 1, 2017- April 1, 2018);

As of April 1, 2018, VVA Facebook had **130,947** likes, an increase from **118,190** likes recorded on April 1, 2017

We have gained nearly **12,000** additional followers since April 1, 2017.



Faces of Agent Orange Facebook 2016-2017

The Faces of Agent Orange Facebook page had a **7%** increase in followers for the same 12-month period (April 1, 2017- April 1, 2018);

As of October 1, 2018, FAO Facebook has **17,731** likes, an increase from **16,517** on April 1, 2017.

VVA Twitter

VVA’s twitter account as of April 1, 2018, has **4,429** followers, up **39%** from April 1, 2017 (**3,181** Followers).

Followers often “retweet” our messages to their followers, some of whom have thousands of followers. This expands VVA’s visibility exponentially.

Faces of Agent Orange Twitter

VVA’s FAO twitter account, as of April 1, 2018, had **1,165** followers, up **15%** from April 1, 2017 (**1,011** Followers) .

Followers often “retweet” our messages to their followers, some of whom have thousands of followers.

YouTube

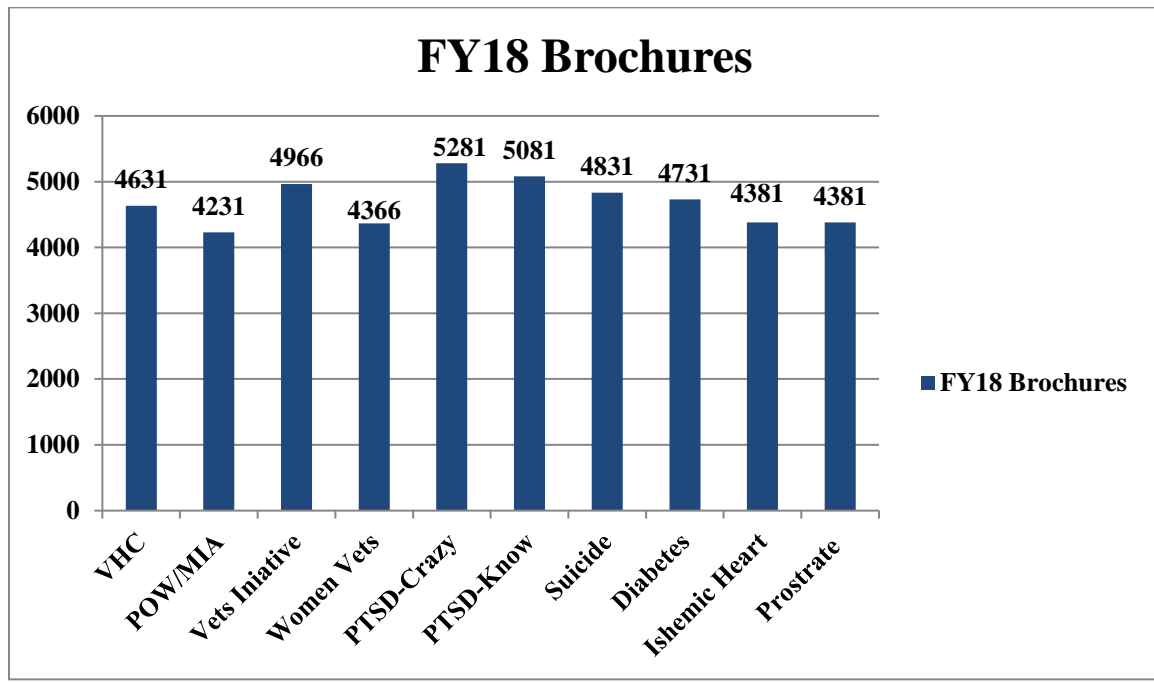


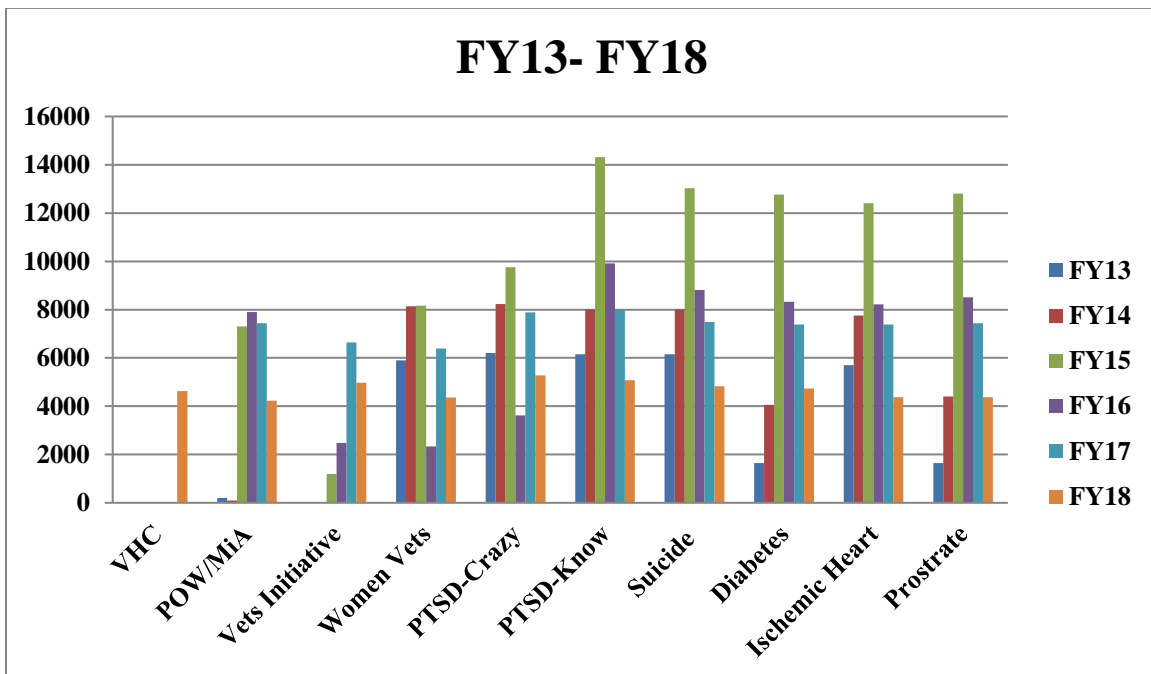
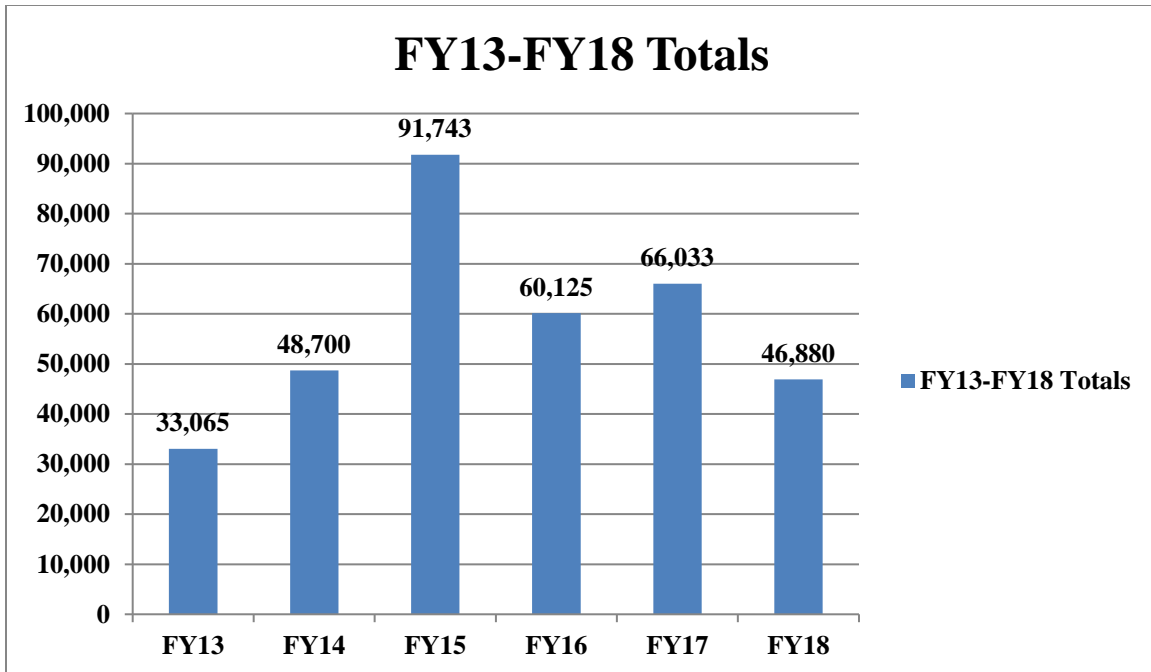
Our Vietnam Veterans of America YouTube channel has **93,503** views and **490** subscribers as of April 1, 2018.

Our Faces of Agent Orange YouTube has **95,257** views and **490** subscribers as of April 1, 2018.

Brochure Totals Fiscal Year 2013-2018

FY18- 46,880 (As of February 28, 2018)





FY2013-2018 347,086 Brochures

NEWS

VVA's **Web Weekly** is distributed to our 28,000 + VVA members, supporters, and members of the media.

Web Weekly is **12.11% OVER** non-profit industry average for percentage opened. Impressively, we have **increased our distribution by 2,915 opt-in addresses since October 1, 2016.**

Agent Orange Town Hall Meetings

301 Faces of Agent Orange Town Hall Meetings have been convened since the first on August 1, 2009; In FY 2018, **33** town hall meetings were held. As of April 3, there are **15** Town hall meetings that have been held or are scheduled for FY 19.

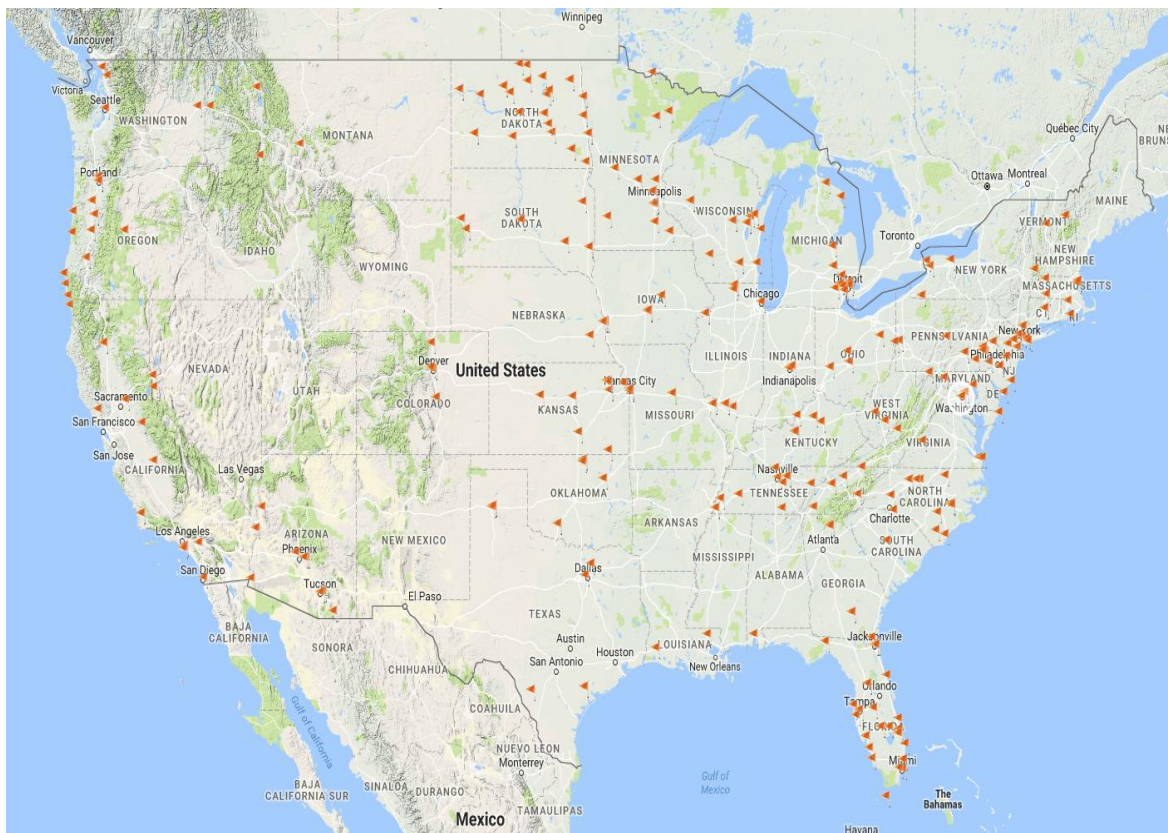
Agent Orange Folders Sent

27,851 Agent Orange folders have been sent in past 6 years--began tracking in 2012
FY18-3,240 | FY17-5,283 | FY16- 6,762 | FY15-7,310 | FY14-3,206 | FY13-2,050

Cases of Agent Orange Booklets Sent

102,920 Agent Orange Self-help Guides sent over past 4 years--began tracking in 2014
FY 18-17,640 | FY17-18,583 | FY16- 29,887 | FY15-36,810

Google Map of Agent Orange Town Hall Meetings to date



HGDP Report/Q. Butcher

Quentin Butcher noted that revenues were up 23% and that expenses were cut by 12%.

Membership Department/T. Houston

Tracie Houston gave an update on the department operation which included that membership rosters were being sent and explained about the yellow cards for the Membership Directory which members were receiving.

National Meetings and Special Events/W. Guidry

Wes Guidry gave an update on several items.

BOD Meeting recesses until Saturday morning: 11:00 am

President Rowan reconvened the meeting on Saturday April 14, 2018, at 9:04 am. Roll Call by National Secretary Meeks of the National Board of Directors & State Council Presidents and other preliminary business.

The National Secretary conducted the roll call of the National Board of Directors. Present were:

John Rowan, President	Gumersindo Gomez	Charlie Montgomery
Marsha Four, Vice President	Bob Grabinski	Rex Moody
Bill Meeks, Secretary	Skip Hochreich	Felix Peterson
Wayne Reynolds, Treasurer	Sharon Hobbs *	Dave Simmons
Dottie Barickman	Francisco Ivarra	Dick Southern
Tom Burke	Allen Manuel	Dan Stenvold
Spence Davis	John Margowski	Kerwin Stone
Ned Foote	Sara McVicker	Sandie Wilson

** AVVA President is a non-voting member of the National Board of Directors*

Present: Joseph A. Sternburg, CFO

Excused: Ted Wilkinson and Father Philip Salois

Secretary Meeks conducted roll call of the State Council Presidents. Present were:

Alabama	Present	Nebraska	Present
Alaska	Absent	Nevada	Present
Arizona	Present	New Hampshire	Absent
Arkansas	Present	New Jersey	Present
California	Present	New Mexico	Present
Colorado	Present	New York	Present
Connecticut	Present	North Carolina	Present
Delaware	Absent	North Dakota	Present
Florida	Present	Ohio	Present
Georgia	Present	Oklahoma	Present
Idaho	Present	Oregon	Present
Illinois	Absent	Pennsylvania	Present

Indiana	Present		Puerto Rico	Absent
Iowa	Absent		Rhode Island	Present
Kansas	Present		South Carolina	Present
Kentucky	Present		South Dakota	Absent
Louisiana	Present		Tennessee	Present
Maryland	Present		Texas	Present
Massachusetts	Present		Utah	Present
Michigan	Present		Vermont	Present
Minnesota	Present		Virginia	Present
Mississippi	Present		Washington	Present
Missouri	Present		West Virginia	Present
Montana	Present		Wisconsin	Present

Future of VVA Working Groups Report

Rev. Bob Lewis explained what members could expect at the Leadership/Education Conference from Working Group I and Working Group II during a power point presentation.

Finance Committee Report

Chair Ned Foote made the following motions out of committee.

Motion 4

**Move to approve the Veterans Health Council Proposed FYE 2-28-19 Budget as presented.
Without objection motion passed.**

Yes: 23

No: 0

Non Vote: 1

Not Present: 0

Motion 5

Move to approve the VVA National Convention (July, 2019) Proposed FYE 2-28-20 Budget as presented.

Without objection motion passed.

Yes: 23

No: 0

Non Vote: 1

Not Present: 0

Motion 6

**Move to approve the VVA Proposed FYE 2-28-19 Budget as presented.
Without objection motion passed.**

Yes: 23

No: 0

Non Vote: 1

Not Present: 0

President Rowan presented the VVA Commendation Medal to Jeff Greulich.

Committee – MOTIONS ONLY

Agent Orange/Dioxin – M. Kaderlik – No motions.

Constitution – L. DeLong – No motions.

Economic Opportunities – F. Barry – No motions.

Veterans Incarcerated and In The Justice System – D. Yezzo – No motions.

Minority Affairs – G. Gomez made the following motion.

Motion 7

To support nomination/appointment of Abner Concepcion as the new Director of VARO San Juan to replace the current Director who is leaving after one year.

Without objection motion passed.

Yes: 23

No: 0

Non Vote: 1

Not Present: 0

There was a lengthy discussion on the Minority Affairs Committee's new proposed VVA Membership Application which concluded with a motion from Director Barickman which was seconded by Director DeLong.

Motion 8

To postpone motion by G. Gomez to redesign VVA Membership Application; to include "Diversity" Section on Side A; until a proposed cost to this project can be ascertained.

President Rowan called for a hand vote, motion passed.

Yes: 16

No: 5

Non Vote: 3

Not Present: 0

Veterans Against Drugs – D. Simmons – No motions.

POW/MIA – G. Coates – No motions.

Membership Affairs – C. Hobbs made the following motion.

Motion 9A

As of April 14, 2018 there will be one class of membership; 1) life membership will be \$50.00; 2) all individual members (April 1, 2017 to April, 2018) who have paid \$20.00 will need to add \$30.00 by December 31, 2018 to meet the requirement; and 3) all 3 year members who paid \$50.00 will automatically become a life member.

There was a lengthy discussion on the motion which concluded with a motion from Director Wilson which was seconded by Director DeLong.

Motion 9B

To postpone motion on the floor to change membership fee and category.

Motion passed.

Yes: 22

No: 1

Non Vote: 1

Not Present: 0

After more discussion on the postponed motion Director McVicker made the following motion with a second from Director Stenvold.

Motion 10

To direct the National Treasurer to obtain an actuarial analysis of the life membership fund projecting various scenarios regarding revenue projection and payments, at a cost not to exceed \$10,000.00 with funding to be taken from current year bequests.

Without objection motion passed.

Yes: 23

No: 0

Non Vote: 1

Not Present: 0

Homeless Veterans - S. Miller made the following motion.

Motion 11

To add Terry Araman as a member to the Homeless Veterans Committee at no cost to National.

Without objection motion passed.

Yes: 23

No: 0

Non Vote: 1

Not Present: 0

Public Affairs – D. Howland made the following motions.

Motion 12

To begin the new National VVA JROTC Medal and Ribbon immediately at the Chapter level only, for this school year and roll out the total program this Fall in the new school year.

Without objection motion passed.

Yes: 23

No: 0

Non Vote: 1
Not Present: 0

Motion 13

That the new JROTC Medal and Ribbon be designated the only official National Vietnam Veterans of America JROTC Medal and Ribbon and that Mokie Porter be the National VVA contact for Chapters to procure this award.

Without objection motion passed.

Yes: 23
No: 0
Non Vote: 1
Not Present: 0

National Leadership Planning Committee – D. Stenvold – No motions
PTSD and Substance Abuse – Dr. T. Hall – No motions
Veterans Benefits – J. Margowski – No motions
Women Veterans – K. O'Hare-Palmer - No motions.
Veterans' Health Care – C. Baker made the following motion.

Motion 14

To add Maynard Kaderlik and Pat Bessigano as members to the Health Care Committee at no cost to National.

Without objection motion passed.

Yes: 23
No: 0
Non Vote: 1
Not Present: 0

Government Affairs – P. Peterson - No motions.

Unfinished Business

There was no Unfinished Business brought before the BOD.

New Business

Honorary Life Membership Requests - Secretary Meeks with a second by Treasurer Reynolds made the following motion.

Motion 15

To approve the honorary life membership requests.

Name	Requested By
Diane Shufelt	Chapter 101 (WI)
Shon Pernice	Chapter 70 (MO)

James N. Mathias, Jr.	MD State Council
Judge Margie Enquist	Chapter 1071 (CO)

Without objection motion passed.

Yes: 23

No: 0

Non Vote: 1

Not Present: 0

President Rowan made the following motion with a second from Director Gomez.

Motion 16

To create an Outreach Initiative to Post VN Veterans.

Without objection motion passed.

Yes: 23

No: 0

Non Vote: 1

Not Present: 0

President Rowan made the following motion with a second from Secretary Meeks.

Motion 17

To appoint Ken Holybee Chair of the Outreach Initiative to Post VN Veterans.

Without objection motion passed.

Yes: 23

No: 0

Non Vote: 1

Not Present: 0

MOU between VVA & the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers, Inc. – T. Burke made the following motion.

Motion 18

The Veterans Benefits Committee moves for the adoption of agreement between National Association of County Veteran Service Officers and VVA.

Memorandum of Understanding

Between Vietnam Veterans of America

And

National Association of County Veteran Service Officers, Inc.

1) BACKGROUND

This memorandum of understanding (MOU) memorializes an agreement of mutual benefit for and between the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO) and the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA).

2) PURPOSE

The purpose of the MOU is to set forth the principles of the working relationship between the VVA and the NACVSO to facilitate our common goal of service to veterans.

- a) This MOU will provide the VVA with a trained, competent, and accredited cadre of County Veterans Service Officers (CVSO) to complement the VVA's accredited National Service Officer Corps.
- b) This MOU will provide eligible NACVSO members who submit complete and approved VVA applications, as detailed below, dual accreditation with VVA. Once dually accredited with VVA, the dually accredited NACVSO member will have access to all records for which the VVA is POA via VA's databases, such as, VBMS, VACOLS, and SEP. In addition, this MOU will provide NACVSO members who are dually accredited with VVA access to VVA's Accredited Representatives, co-located within VA Regional Offices, to assist in the development, presentation, prosecution, and appeals of veterans' claims.

3) VVA ACCREDITATION

Each NACVSO member seeking accreditation with VVA will be provided a copy of this MOU, along with the VVA Accreditation Agreement. The eligible NACVSO member must then submit a completed application to VVA's National Service Director through the designated NACVSO point of contact. A completed application will include (1) a VVA application; (2) DD-214; (3) VA Form 21; (4) proof of NACVSO course completion and (5) proof of successfully completion of the NACVSO examination. VVA will only accept NACVSO applicants from states that have been pre-approved by both VVA's National Service Director and VVA's State Council President of the state that the applicant will work. In recommending a CVSO for accreditation, NACVSO shall certify:

- a) The CVSO is a paid employee of a specified county working for not less than 1,000 hours annually or the CVSO is accredited and functioning as a representative of another recognized organization IAW 38 C.F.R. §§ 14.627(k) and 14.629 (a)(2);
- b) The CVSO has successfully completed, at a minimum, the NACVSO 32-hour course of training and successfully passed an examination approved by the VA;
- c) The CVSO will receive annual training to assure continued qualification as a representative in the claims process;
- d) The CVSO is accredited by NACVSO

4) CVSO ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- a) When requesting VVA Accreditation for the first time, the CVSO will be given a USER ID and PASSWORD by VVA to view required videos on the Advanced Log Form.

- b) The applicant must satisfactorily complete the Advanced Video Log Form within 6 months of receiving a USER ID and PASSWORD.
- c) The CVSO is not required to complete the training *prior* to being eligible for VVA Accreditation.
- d) Failure to review the required videos within the 6 months period may result in revocation of VVA Accreditation.

5) VVA TERMS AND LIMITATIONS OF CVSO ACCREDITATION

CVSOs must agree to abide by the following VVA terms and limitations of accreditation:

- a) CVSOs must agree to distribute VVA Statement of Policy for Representation to all clientele electing VVA representation;
- b) CVSO must submit VA form 21 and proof of NACVSO Accreditation to VVA to successfully be accredited;
- c) CVSOs must process all client related information (i.e., correspondence, forms etc.) in a prompt and timely manner through the VVA Claims Division for review prior to submission to the VA;
- d) CVSOs may not prepare appellate briefs (VA Form 646) on behalf of the VVA clientele; and
- e) CVSOs may be present but not represent VVA clientele before administrative hearing personnel and/or panels (i.e., DRO, BVA, CAVC, etc.).

6) REVOCATION OF ACCREDITATION

In addition to the circumstances described in 38 C.F.R - § 14.633, either party reserves the right to revoke accreditation for failure to uphold the terms of this MOU.

7) INFORMATION DISCLOSURE AND DATA SHARING

- a) NACVSO agrees to provide annual certification of continued employment as a CVSO and accredited member of the NACVSO via complete listing of those eligible for VVA accreditation. In addition, NACVSO will promptly notify VVA of those holding VVA accreditation and who are no longer members of the NACVSO for any reason.
- b) NACVSO agrees to provide VVA quick notice of any and all CVSOs whom no longer hold accreditation or membership through NACVSO.

8) POINTS OF CONTACT

Principal points of contact for accreditation processing and MOU accountability.

VVA
 Kelsey Yoon
 Director, Veterans Benefits Program
 Vietnam Veterans of America
 (301) 335-2183
kyoon@vva.org

NACVSO

Michael Roof

National Service Director

National Association of County Veteran Service Officers

(815) 263-2027

mroof@nacvso.org

9) DURATION, MODIFICATION, AND TERMINATION OF AGREEMENT

This MOU shall become effective upon the date of signature of both approving parties, and shall remain in effect until five (5) years after the effective date. Either party may terminate this MOU at any time, with or without cause, upon thirty (30) days written notice to the other party's point of contact.

10) APPROVALS

Approved and accepted on behalf of Vietnam Veterans of America:

_____	_____
John Rowan	Date
National President	
Vietnam Veterans of America	

Approved and Accepted on behalf of National Association of County Veterans Service Officers:

_____	_____
Michael Roof	Date
National Service Director	
National Association of County Veterans Service Officers, Inc.	

Without objection motion passed.

Yes: 23

No: 0

Non Vote: 1

Not Present: 0

Director Montgomery made the following motions with a second from Director Moody.

Motion 19

To support the proposal from Dr. Hall on putting a survey together on how the Vet Centers work with Veterans.

Without objection motion passed.

Yes: 23

No: 0

Non Vote: 1

Not Present: 0

Motion 20

To support the separation of the VVA Website to a Public site and a Members only site.

Without objection motion passed.

Yes: 23

No: 0

Non Vote: 1

Not Present: 0

Committee Reports Only:

Written Reports (digital requested) submitted to National Secretary will be in the Appendix of these minutes.

Agent Orange/Dioxin – M. Kaderlik – verbal & written reports

Constitution – L. DeLong – verbal & written reports

Economic Opportunities – F. Barry – verbal & written report

Veterans Incarcerated and In The Justice System – D. Yezzo – verbal report

Minority Affairs – G. Gomez – verbal & written reports

Veterans Against Drugs – D. Simmons – verbal report

POW/MIA – G. Coates – verbal & written reports

Membership Affairs – C. Hobbs – verbal & written report

Meeting recessed for Lunch 11:50 am

President Rowan reconvened the meeting of Vietnam Veterans of America National Board of Directors on Saturday April 14, 2018, at 1:26 pm.

Committee Reports Only (con't):

Homeless Veterans - S. Miller – verbal report

Public Affairs – D. Howland – verbal & written reports

National Leadership Planning Committee – D. Stenvold – verbal report

PTSD and Substance Abuse – Dr. T. Hall – verbal report

Veterans Benefits – T. Burke – verbal & written reports

Women Veterans – K. O'Hare-Palmer - verbal & written reports

Veterans Health Care – C. Baker – verbal report

Government Affairs – P. Peterson – verbal report

The meeting adjourned at 3:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Meeks, Jr.", with a stylized, cursive script.

Bill Meeks, Jr.
National Secretary
Approved 7/24/2018

Appendix: Committee Reports

Constitution Committee Report
April 13, 2018

Report of the Chair

Answered questions from members, chapters and state councils related to bylaws, the constitution and parliamentary procedures. Referred several inquiries received via the VVA “Contact Us” page to the appropriate person. Assisted one chapter with its bylaws revision and worked on proposed seminars for the 2018 NLC.

Constitution Committee meeting April 13, 2018

Committee Opinion

The Membership Department has received several election reports with unfilled officer positions and the committee was asked for an opinion regarding this issue which will likely become more common soon. Each state’s Not-For-Profit law requires corporations to have certain officer positions. The VVA Constitution gives chapters great flexibility in determining the number of officer positions from as few as three to as many as the chapter desires. **It is the committee’s opinion that if the chapter cannot amend its bylaws to eliminate a position because they have the minimum number of officers and no chapter member will step up to fill a required position the chapter should be dissolved.**

Leslie DeLong, Chair
National Constitution Committee

National Veterans Benefit Committee - April 2018 Report

The committee met on Thursday evening April 12 and again on Friday morning April 13.

1. Roll Call was held and it was determined that a quorum was present.
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Minutes of the January committee meeting were presented and approved.
4. Director Yoon presented an abbreviated verbal Directors report to the committee. She also provided the committee with her written report as well. She advised the committee with the updated status on the Ramp proposal by the VA. The purpose of the information was to let the committee know that many Veterans would be contacted by the VA. Our department continued to recommend that no veteran should opt in to the pilot program. As of this writing, to our knowledge none of the staff at the VA had as yet been trained on the new program. And if the Veteran opted into the new program they could not go back to the legacy version for adjudication. Once switched over that was all she wrote.
5. National President, Sharon Hobbs, AVVA presented her report to the committee. The committee was advised that John Rowan, Sharon Hobbs, Marc McCabe, Kelsey Yoon and Tom Burke had met to discuss the future of the AVVA Service Officer program. Without going into

a lot of detail suffice to say, it was decided that due to current liability and other issues it was in the best interest of all concerned to begin the phase out of the AVVA Service Officer program immediately. This will take place over the next 6 months.

6. Committee Budget was discussed with no changes.

7A -.Report of Sub-Committees:

Service officer Grievance Committee - Chair Joe Jennings advised that his committee had nothing pending at this time and reported no issues in the works.

7B. Grant Review Committee: - Chair Joe Kristek - Advised that all current grantees had submitted their reports as required. Also the new grant cycle has begun. All grant submissions were reviewed for accuracy and content. Thirteen submissions were received in all. Of the thirteen submissions, six were complete, six were incomplete and one was complete, but submitted late. The committee decided that the six submissions that were received incomplete that those individuals programs would be docked one months grant money. They would subsequently be receiving letters from the department advising them of the errors that were found and that they would have two weeks to correct the applications and resubmit them to Silver Spring. If the grantees in question did not complete and return the application in the allotted time then the grant would be withheld until such time as said application was received in the correct manner.

VBC report - April - 2018 - page 2

7C Strategic Planning Committee - Chair Marc McCabe advised that the committee is moving forward with a VBC Policy rewrite. All committee members should begin receiving updates by the end of the month.

8. New Business:

1. Submission of six months reports are now due.

2. Appeals modernization Act - Kelsey re-submitted a proposal to the finance committee for review as an update of her budget to hold a 3 day training session in January of 2019 for Service Officers. The revised budget was reduced to \$65,000 round numbers from a cost \$109,000 dollars for the three days. The committee would also consider providing CEU's for the training or a certificate of completion or both. This plan was approved by the finance committee.

3. Records Retention - This refers to the current project of this committee concerning Paper scanning. There was \$25,000 dollars put into Kelsey's budget last year to provide some back up of money to help- State Council's with expenses doing the project. The project was re-submitted to the finance committee for \$50,000. Unfortunately this request was cut from the current budget. We will have to try again next year.

4. Recertification of Service Officers - This recertification was required by the Veterans Administration. Almost all VVA Service Officers have completed the recertification process. We have two or three left to complete recertification. We truly appreciate our Service Officers responding to this request.

5. We have been negotiating with the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers (NACVSO) for an MOU with VVA for several months. A document was completed and presented to the National Board of Directors for approval. The motion was made at this meeting and the document was approved by the NBOD.

6. Advanced Service Officer Training - This will take place at the Leadership Conference in Palm Springs. All Service Officers are encouraged to participate. Only VVA Certified Service Officers will be allowed to attend this training.

VBC Report - April - 2018

7. Electronic Signatures - New addition to the Policy Guide. VVA prohibits its Veteran Service Officers (VSO's) from storing a claimant's signature in electronic form for future use. Best Practice is to have the claimant sign the document him or herself. However, this may not always be possible. Therefore, if the claimant is not able to provide a signature and consents to the VSO signing on behalf of the claimant the VSO can sign document on the Veterans behalf. In this case the VSO should add VVA VSO "for" the individual.

8. Service Officer of the Year Award - VVA's Veterans Benefits Program (VBP) requests your assistance in identifying outstanding candidates for the 2nd Annual Service Officer of the Year Award! VVA's Service Officer of the Year award will be awarded to a VVA accredited service officer in recognition of his or her zealous advocacy on behalf of veterans and their families each year. All nominations must be received by June 15, 2018 to be considered. The announcement of the 2018 Service Officer of the Year will be announced at the Advanced Service Officer Training Seminar on Friday July 27, 2018.

9. On Friday, April 13th normal business was suspended to allow our Guest Speaker, Ms. Cheryl Mason who is Chair of the Board of Veteran Appeals, Washington D.C. Ms. Mason spoke to our committee. She detailed how the board works and how claims appeals are moved forward. The committee found the conversation interesting and we were pleased to have her with us for over an hour.

End of report

Submitted

Tom Burke -
National Chair - Veterans Benefits Committee

EOC Report April, 2018

Four members of the Economic Opportunities Committee (Dennis Andras, Marc Goldschmitt, Joe Wynn of VetForce and I) made a visit to Capitol Hill on Thursday, April 12 to talk about the issues of VA privatization (which we oppose), small business concerns, and pending legislation.

Committee member Dennis Andras from Louisiana was able to set up a meeting with Congressman Steve Scalise who is House Majority Whip. He told us that when any legislation concerning veterans crosses his desk, he always asks where do the Veteran Service Organization stand on this. We were able to express our concerns and establish a relationship with him and his staff for the future.

Our second visit was with Jon Clark and Kelsey Baron of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity which is drafting legislation to establish the Veterans Economic Opportunity Administration (VEOA) which moves existing economic opportunity programs and support staff from the Veterans Benefits Administration to the new VEOA. Programs include: Voc-Rehab, educational assistance programs, veterans' housing loan and related programs, verification of small veteran-owned businesses, and the Transition Assistance Program. This program will secure equality and accountability for economic opportunity programs at VA. The EOC will write a letter of support when the bill is introduced.

Our third visit was with William Mallison, Contract Investigator, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. Our members who own businesses were able to talk about contract procurement and clarify requirements for awarding contracts.

Our final visit was with Brian Fitzpatrick of the Pennsylvania 8th District who has introduced a bill to improve contracting opportunities for veteran-owned small businesses entitled Fairness to Veterans for Infrastructure Investment Act. Members were able to discuss their business concerns.

Two other pieces of legislation the committee discussed are: H.R. 3170, the Small Business Development Center Cyber Training Act of 2017 and H.R. 4668, the Small Business Advanced Cybersecurity Enhancements Act of 2017.

The EOC Members will continue to support legislation and advocate for more employment and business development opportunities for all veterans.

VVA WOMEN VETERAN COMMITTEE REPORT. APRIL 13, 2018. SILVER SPRINGS, MD.

The meeting was called to order at 2:08pm. There were 17 members and guests in attendance. The January meeting minutes were approved with minor name spelling corrections. The agenda for today's meeting had two additions.

Topics:

1. Michael Keating, Veteran Magazine Editor, came and spoke about idea of highlighting women important to the history of VVA in the Fall issue of the magazine. There will be an excerpt from 'Home Before Morning', Lynda Van DeVenter's book. He wants to emphasize the history, women veteran issues, and the bridge between our era and today's women veterans. There was some great discussion on some of the early days and the first and second conventions and some of the women's involvement. Marsha has some past articles that were copied and given to Michael...stories are encouraged to be emailed to Kate and Michael by June 2018.
2. Report of the Chair. Working in California on veteran issues. I have been elected as Sonoma County Veteran of the Year and will attend two local parades, speak for Memorial Day at our Memorial Park, and speak at the City Hall Chambers. We are still working with fire victims from last October. It will be a long process.
3. Budget reviewed. Last cycle showed a 12% overage. Due to increased travel expenses.
4. SWAN report on Sexual Harassment and Assault was reviewed. Encouraged members to take this home to share with chapters and state councils. It was an on line survey plus results of focus groups. Over 50% of those surveyed do use the VA for health care. The top three personal challenges included (a) job and assignment opportunities (b)gender bias(c)family policies and practices. The top three community challenges included (a)gender bias(b)family policies and practices(c)Sexual Harassment & Assault. The most important factors for staying in the service included being part of a team; job security; financial considerations; commitment to mission. The most important factor for leaving the Service included family considerations; lack of promotion and job opportunities; lack of community/inclusion. Top priorities for women veterans include Mental health, financial stability, and connecting to a community of fellow women veterans. Their other concerns include: access to women-specific health care and navigating the VA claims and health care system.
5. Webpage: the committee chairs had Jeff Gulich , VVA webmaster, present some new ways to improve access to the committee reports on the web and additional information that we want to share with the membership.
6. Leadership conference. A seminar topic was submitted on, " New rules of engagement: Sexual Harassment Prevention Training. " Discussion held on ways to include various teaching models. The seminars will be announced tomorrow.
7. VVA Women Veteran Reception 11.09.2018 @ 5pm in O'Bryne Gallary at the DAR building in DC for the 25th Anniversary of Vietnam Women's Memorial . Much discussion and details coming.
8. Maureen presented topic on mature women veterans prosthetics for gynecological/urology issues in conjunction with the VA. Would like to develop a live FACEBOOK Seminar..with VA and one of our VVA members plus Maureen to be presented in Fall? We will coordinate this.

Meeting adjourned @ 3:50pm.
Ch.

Kate O'Hare-Palmer, VVA Women Committee

VVA-PROPOSED WOMEN VETERAN COMMITTEE GOALS AND ACTIVITIES. FY 2018-2019.

SHORT TERM

- Develop 2018-1019 budget
- Collaborate with State and Local Chapters to deliver women Veteran updates in regards to mental and physical health, legislative agendas, and support.
- Retire women veteran committee trifold.

LONG TERM

- Continue to create a contact list of Women Veteran VVA representatives in each state.
- Create Leadership Conference Seminar.
- Seek congressional oversight and accountability on all VA Medical Centers and VISN Directors' compliance of measures as defined in the current VA Handbook.
- Monitor and coordinate with VA offices on their delivery of benefits and services to women veterans
 - include VVA women veteran members on membership boards of local VA Medical centers for flow of information and needs of women veterans.
- Work with S.W.A.N, IAVA and other veteran service organizations with legislative issues concerning Military Sexual Trauma.
- Develop liaisons with other Federal agencies, state and local agencies, organizations, veterans service organizations, and non-government partners.
- Work with V VA Health Committee on Ft. McClellan Toxic Exposures.
- Promote recognition of Women Veterans' military service and contributions by sponsoring activities and special events.
 - Participate in veteran outreach with Membership Affairs committee at the Memorial Day and Veterans Day events on the Mall.
 - sponsor Vietnam 50th Memorial celebration in partnership with State Level VVA with inclusion of information on Women Veterans.
- Create new parts to Women Veteran committee website to include: highlights on VVA women members, current issues regarding women veterans, information on claims process for women veterans.

Minority Affairs Committee
Report to the Board
April 14, 2018

The Committee met on April 13, 2018 and discuss an array of issues; first and foremost is our planning of our Leadership/Education Conference diversity summit.

The committee is working together in bringing an educational piece on minority Veterans affairs that will show how minority veterans are not using their whole VA benefits, where of 2.0 million minority veterans register in 2014 with the VA only 1.3 mil use those services. The committee is seeking to find answer on why the 700,000 don't use the VA benefits.

As chair, I looked into the VA Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans on what they are doing at their level with Minority Veterans issues. These are some of their recommendations that they have done to the VA Secretary for FY18. **That the Department of Veterans Affairs collect and analyze race and ethnicity data across all business lines to identify, monitor, and address potential disparities that affect minority Veterans by the start of FY18.**

Another recommendation is one that we at the Committee had a resolution on for years and that is: **that the Department of Veterans Affairs ensure that the Spanish language versions of the instructions for applications for VA benefits and services are readily available, especially in areas of the country with high Latino/Hispanic populations, to assist veterans and their family members seeking benefits and services.** Just to mention a few of these recommendations made by the Advisory committee.

We also had a visitor at our Committee meeting. Ms. Barbara Ward, Executive Director of the VA Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans Center, she was instrumental in given us pointers for our own Diversity Summit in July. Also she talked to us about the new panel that the VA is creating to which a VA National 2019 Minority Veterans Summit where I have join as a member of the panel representing VVA (**with Mr. John Rowan approval**) as a POC to the Nation's Hispanic Veterans including Puerto Rico. VVA is the only National Veterans' Organization that is represented at the panel.

And lastly I presented the Committee with the minority veterans' membership VVA application for their approval, it was approved by the committee. This application is a replica of the VVA general application, just that in the front of the application we have place our Diversity statement, our mission, vision and values. Also that by using this application for minorities veterans we could have some sense of how many new minority veterans we have brought into the organization.

Respectfully,

Gumersindo Gomez
Chair

MAC

**Veterans Initiative Program
POW-MIA Committee**

14 April 2018
Report to the Board
VVA National Board of Directors Meeting

- **To Date: Missing** – 2,598
- Accounted: 985 since 1975
- 1,598 Americans are listed by DOD as missing and unaccounted.
 - a. In addition, 63 US personnel were accounted for between 1973 and 1975.
- 1,048 American remains have been repatriated from the Vietnam War: Vietnam – 721, Laos – 282, Cambodia – 42, and the PRC – 3.
- Since January DPAA accounted for:
 - a. Col. Edgar F. Davis, U.S. Air Force, of North Carolina, listed as MIA 09/17/1968, in Laos, identified/announced 01/18/2018
 - b. Lt. Col. Robert G. Nopp, U.S. Army, of Oregon, listed as MIA 07/14/1966, recovered 02/17/16, identified 01/02/2018.
 - c. Private 1st Class Marshall F. Kipina, U.S. Army, of Michigan, listed as MIA 07/14/1966 in Laos, recovered 02/17/2016, Identified 2/1/2018.
 - d. Colonel (Col) Peter Stewart, U.S. Air Force, of Florida, listed as MIA 03/15/1966 in North Vietnam, identified/announced 6 April, 2018.
- 2018 Veterans Initiative Program Mission report:
 - 25 day Mission - 17 January through January 10, 2018.
 - 8 days travel
 - 10 meetings days
 - 24 scheduled meetings
 - 3 cancelled meetings
 - Meetings with Vietnamese National Ministries, provincial peoples committees, veterans associations, and humanitarian groups associated with missing personnel from the war.

The exchange of information and future planning for increased cooperative efforts and activities relating to the efforts of locating the missing from the war, both U.S. and Vietnamese, displayed an ever increasing cohesive mutual determination to account for the missing from war in Vietnam.

After Action Report Mission 25, 2018 attached

**Vietnam Veterans of America
POW-MIA Committee
Veterans Initiative Program
After Action Report
Mission 25**

2018

January 19th was the start of the 25th mission to Vietnam for the Veterans Initiative Program team. Coincidentally, 2018 is also the 25th anniversary of the program, and the 23rd year of normalization between Vietnam and the United States.

Starting from their respective homes the team, consisting of VVA Vice President Marsha Four, Pow-MIA Committee Chair Grant Coates, and Communications Director Mokie Porter, assembled in Los Angeles for movement to Seoul, South Korea to continue to Noi Bai Airport, Hanoi, Vietnam.

A medical emergency required Vice President Four to be hospitalized in Hanoi and medevaced to Philadelphia for care.

The team continued the mission and started meetings Monday, January 22nd with Defense Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Accounting Agency (DPAA) Detachment 2, Hanoi. Lt. Col. Romel Pajimula, detachment commander led a briefing of current and projected field activities in Vietnam which included off shore underwater investigations and possible recoveries. Excellent cooperative relations aided in the unilateral recovery efforts involving four cases. While the challenges of witnesses passing away continue to hamper investigations, restriction bans on excavations in Than Hua and Haiphong Provinces have been lifted.

The next meeting was with the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations (VUFO). The organizational award “Medal for Peace & Friendship among nations” was presented to team members, VVA, and President John Rowan to “recognize and honor the contributions of organizations and members of VVA in consolidating and strengthening friendly relations and cooperation between two peoples.” At the ceremony, Mr. Don Tuan Phong, Vice President and Secretary General of the Union, thanked the contributions that VVA and the members have been doing for Vietnam. Attending the ceremony was Ambassador Nguyen Tam Chien, Chairman of the Vietnam-USA Society, Bui The Giang, Deputy Chairman and Bui Van Nghi, Secretary-General of V-US Society. Also in attendance were representatives of Vietnam’s Central Commission for External Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Vietnamese-American Committees and units in the Union.

Veterans Association of Vietnam Director of External Relations Department, Senior Col (retired) Tran Ngoc Dan, chaired the next meeting. Dan stated “Your program is very useful to both sides. We have done well in the past. We need to continue delegations on both sides. We continue to look for information like your pilots and we continue to look forward to receiving information on our missing from war”. Dan also stated “One of our main tasks as an organization and as individuals is to continue to work with veterans of our country’s past wars to cooperate with them to return the remains of the loved ones, and our war martyrs.” VAVN has 4 million members.

A scheduled meeting with U.S. Ambassador Daniel Kritenbrick was cancelled due to a temporary U.S. Government shutdown.

The meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was a reunion of an old friendship and a pleasant surprise. Ha Kim Ngoc, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, had received an appointment as the new Vietnamese Ambassador to the United States for 2018-2020. Ngoc has been very supportive of the Veterans Initiative program for several years. Also in attendance was a representative from the Vietnam Office Seeking Lost and Missing People (VNOSMP) who work in cooperation with Detachment 2, Hanoi.

The meeting with Madame Nguyen Thi Binh, who negotiated at the Paris Peace Conference on behalf of the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam, was cancelled due to her health and hearing loss.

A meeting was held on January 24th with the Ministry of National Defense (MOD). Senior Colonel Nguyen Quang Vinh led the Vietnamese panel which consisted of officers representing the Department of Welfare, Department of Foreign Affairs and War Legacy Issues. Developments during the past year in areas of relationships between the two countries, senior dignitary visits, The U.S. Secretary of Defense imminent visit, the porting of a U.S. Carrier strike group in Da Nang, maritime security, war legacy issues and cooperation, mutual desires for increased documentation regarding missing in action cases were some of the topics discussed. A Level 2 field hospital under management of Vietnam Military Hospital 175 was to depart Vietnam to Sudan in support of U.N. Peacekeeping missions.

An exchange of dialog and materials was completed during a meeting with Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin (VAVA). Senior Lt. General Nguyen Van Rin, Chair and Pham Truong, Director of External Relations Department, were gracious hosts and glad to meet the team again.

The meeting with Ministry of National Defense Technology Centre for Bomb and Mine Disposal (BOMICEN) was cancelled due to the pending visit of U.S. Secretary of Defense General Mattis.

After traveling to Hue, meetings were held with VAVA, V-US Friendship Association of Thau Thien-Hue Province. VAVN advised the team that 127 bodies had been recovered from the edge of the runway at Tan Son Nhut airport in June of 2017. Also, the Ministry of Defense has conducted a four year review of the progress on the accounting issue of both sides which showed 145 sets of remains have been identified of the 150 sets recovered.

“We now are seeing four generations of victims of Agent Orange. The support is a long term consequence”, stated Nguyen Dung, Vice Chair of the Peoples Committee of Thau Thien-Hue Province. The province has areas in need of remediation of Agent Orange, such as the A Shau Valley.

At the meeting with the Peoples Committee and QUFO, of Quang Tri Province, Hoang Dang Mai, Vice Chair of QUFO and VAVN stated “Quang Tri was a fierce battlefield. It is highly contaminated by landmines. 80% of the land is contaminated by landmines. We also encourage veterans and people of Quang Tri to provide any information they have on U.S. remains. People

are very aware of their responsibilities to inform authorities of any such information. In 2017, 4 sets of U.S. remains were returned with our assistance”.

The team traveled to the Camp Carroll site, located south of Highway 9, accompanied by a Vietnamese combat veteran who was knowledgeable of the area. A history of the area was provided and the veteran took the team to the location of a burial site that was located off of the base where 76 buried NVA/VC bodies had been recovered. One of the V.I. cases had eye witness facts of the same burial site containing approximately 40 bodies.

While enroute south to Da Nang, the team, along with Bui Van Nghi, Secretary General of V-US, stopped at the area of what was once Firebase Tomahawk and paid respects to the dead of the first battle which occurred in 19 June 1969. U.S. deaths were 9 and 23 North Vietnamese were killed.

In Da Nang, Huynh Duc Truong, Chair of Da Nang Union of Friendship Organizations said that the Da Nang area in 2017 had 6.3 million tourists, of which 2.3 million were foreign visitors.

While in the Da Nang area, meetings were also conducted with Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin of Da Nang City (DAVA), VAVN, and the Peoples Committee.

In Tam Ky, Quang Nam Province, once Quang Tin, meetings were held with the Peoples Committee, VAVN, and V-US.

On the last week of the mission, the team relocated to Ho Chi Minh City by flying from Da Nang to Tan Son Nhat Airport. The airport, in 2017, handled 35.9 million people and 230,975 aircraft moved through the airport. That volume is the same as Logan International Airport in Boston, Mass., with ground traffic just as bad, if not worse than Boston’s famous gridlock.

Meetings with VAVN were productive and enlightening. The Vice President stated that the V.I. has over the past 25 years pushed forward the relationship between the two countries. The VAVN was also appreciative of the V.I. visiting Vietnamese war cemeteries. “Like you, as a veteran, we have visited those battle fields where we were before”.

A briefing of current programs and projected projects meeting was held with U.S. Consulate General Deputy Principal Officer Timothy E. Liston and staff. With some new staff in attendance, the mission of the Veterans Initiative was presented including past successes.

After a meeting with the HCMC Union of Friendship Organizations, the last formal meeting of the 2018 mission was with the Peoples Committee of HCMC. Nguyen Tuan, Deputy Director General, Department of External Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said “ I hope you will continue to make contributions into the future. Thus far, with your information we have recovered 1,500 soldiers. I appreciate VVA’s annual trip to Vietnam.”

Visiting the V-US Society’s English Training System in HCMC has become an informal tradition to see the expansion of education in Vietnam’s efforts to advance the English language

to better the economic possibilities for the next generation of Vietnamese. Mr. Pham Tan Nghia, Director General of the VUS-ETS informed the team that the school system gained 10,000 new students in 2017, totaling 220,000 students with an average of 55,000 students. Located in 24 centers with 4 in Hanoi with one in Bin Duag, and one in Bien Hoa, 1,653 experienced teachers and a support staff of 800, the system is constantly growing. Mr. Nghia said they are always looking for English language teachers.

The last event for the team prior to leaving Vietnam was a visit to the Sax N Art Jazz Club, owned by the main performer, Tran Manh Tuan. Mr. Tuan, a graduate of Berklee College of Music, Boston, Mass., has been a great supporter of the V.I. P. for many years. He gave permission for use of his recorded music to aid the Veterans Initiative Program public relations programs.

Saturday, February 10th, all arrived home.

In conclusion, the 2018 Mission of the Veterans Initiative Program to Vietnam created a positive impression involving the relationships with various Vietnamese agencies, organizations and government officials. The exchange of information and future planning for increased cooperative efforts and activities relating to the efforts of locating the missing from the war, both U.S. and Vietnamese, displayed an ever increasing cohesive mutual determination to account for the missing from war in Vietnam.



Membership (MAC) Report

April 2018

In October this past year, we achieved a milestone by reaching an all-time high in membership of 80,000+ members. Since October 2017 we have seen our growth slow down somewhat but still on the rise. Our new goal is 85,000; we are almost halfway there and with everyone's help we will achieve this goal.

Our Fourth Annual Membership Growth Awards program concluded on February 28, 2018. The recipients will be announced at the National Leadership Conference in Palm Springs, CA. We will be asking our past winners to submit a short summary as to how they are increasing their membership totals. Those will be distributed at the 2018 Leadership Conference too.

After final approval from the Board of Directors of the proposed MAC budget, the committee will not be traveling to any unit reunions as had been planned due budget restraints.

Lastly, we are gearing up for a huge Memorial Day Weekend in Washington DC. The tent will be open from Saturday, May 26th – Monday May 28th. I want to invite everyone in DC that weekend to stop by the Membership tent for a visit.

We have submitted a proposed seminar for the upcoming Leadership and Educational Conference. Tracie Houston, Director of the Membership Department, will educate our leaders to the new online additions to the VVA website.

Charlie Hobbs, Chair