

**MINUTES
of the
FIFTH MEETING
of the
MILITARY AND VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**October 24-25, 2022
State Capitol, Room 307
Santa Fe**

The fifth and final meeting of the Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee for the 2022 interim was called to order by Senator Harold Pope, co-chair, on October 24, 2022 at 9:05 a.m. in Room 307 of the State Capitol in Santa Fe.

Present

Rep. Harry Garcia, Co-Chair
Sen. Harold Pope, Co-Chair
Rep. Eliseo Lee Alcon
Sen. Craig W. Brandt
Sen. Shannon D. Pinto
Rep. Debra M. Sariñana (10/24)
Rep. Luis M. Terrazas (10/25)

Absent

Sen. Brenda G. McKenna

Advisory Members

Rep. Randal S. Crowder (10/24)
Rep. Stefani Lord
Rep. Randall T. Pettigrew

Rep. Rachel A. Black
Sen. William F. Burt
Rep. Meredith A. Dixon
Rep. D. Wonda Johnson
Sen. Michael Padilla
Rep. Jane E. Powdrell-Culbert
Rep. G. Andrés Romero

Guest Legislator

Rep. Cathrynn N. Brown (10/24)

(Attendance dates are noted for members not present for the entire meeting.)

Staff

Jeret Fleetwood, Project Coordinator, Legislative Council Service (LCS)
Nancy Martinez, Research Assistant, LCS

Minutes Approval

Because the committee will not meet again this year, the minutes for this meeting have not been officially approved by the committee.

Guests

The guest list is in the meeting file.

Handouts

Handouts and other written testimony are in the meeting file and posted on the legislature's website.

References to Webcast

The time reference noted next to each agenda item in this document is cross-referenced to the webcast of the committee meeting, which can be found at www.nmlegis.gov, under the "Webcast" tab. The presentations made and committee discussions for the agenda items can be found on the recorded webcast for this meeting.

Monday, October 24

Welcome and Introductions (9:06 a.m.)

Senator Pope welcomed everyone to the meeting. Members of the committee and staff introduced themselves.

New Mexico National Guard (9:13 a.m.)

Brigadier General Miguel Aguilar, adjutant general, New Mexico National Guard, introduced his staff and gave an overview of the mission and values of the National Guard. Brigadier General Aguilar also explained a legislative proposal that would enact the National Guard Death Benefit Act and amend Section 20-4-7.1 NMSA 1978 to deploy members of the National Guard under state active duty as either full-time or seasonal state employees. The presentation can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/handouts/MVAC%20102422%20Item%201%20NM%20National%20Guard.pdf>.

New Mexico Veterans Administration (VA) Health Care System (11:04 a.m.)

Robert McKenrick, executive director, VA New Mexico Health Care, gave a presentation on the federal Honoring our PACT Act of 2022 (PACT). Mr. McKenrick said that in New Mexico, he anticipates that approximately 28,000 veterans will benefit in some aspect from the PACT act. There have also been 29 new conditions with presumption of service connection added to the toxic exposure list. The presentation can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/handouts/MVAC%20102422%20Item%202%20NMVA%20HCS.pdf>.

Veterans' Services Department (DVS) (2:57 p.m.)

Sonya Smith, secretary, DVS, introduced Robin Wilson, director, Field Services Division, DVS; Diane Mourning Brown, director, Health Care Coordination Division, DVS; Theresa Figueroa, program coordinator, Women' Veterans Program, DVS; and David Walker, bureau chief, Cemeteries and Memorials, DVS. Secretary Smith also introduced Donnie

Quintana, who was appointed interim deputy secretary as Secretary Smith is retiring in November. Secretary Smith highlighted several accomplishments of the department, such as keeping community-based outpatient clinics open, implementing successful marketing campaigns and expanding medical transportation availability to all counties. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=MVAC&Date=10/24/2022&ItemNumber=3>.

Availability of Services (2:03 p.m.)

Terry Smith, United States Marine Corps (retired), said that he is an 80% disabled veteran. He said he is not representing anyone in particular, but for personal reasons has decided to advocate for improving the impact of the DVS on veterans and extending and enhancing its reach.

Update on the Navajo Code Talkers Museum (2:26 p.m.)

Regan Hawthorne, secretary-treasurer, Navajo Code Talkers Museum Corporation, gave an overview of the Navajo Code Talkers Museum project at Tse Bonito. He said that the project's mission is to create, build and maintain a national-level, world-class museum. On August 14, 2022, there was a groundbreaking and Navajo blessing ceremony for the Navajo Code Talkers Museum. The presentation can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/handouts/MVAC%20102422%20Item%204%20Update%20on%20Navajo%20Code%20Talkers%20Museum.pdf>.

Female Veterans' Issues (3:15 p.m.)

Ms. Figueroa and Ms. Wilson said that currently there is a plan of action to increase outreach by collaborating with veteran service officers to develop marketing and communication materials for women veterans and to conduct women-veteran-specific town halls. The presentation can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/handouts/MVAC%20102422%20Item%206%20Female%20Veterans'%20Issues.pdf>.

Public Comment (3:35 p.m.)

A list of individuals making public comment is available in the meeting file.

Recess

The meeting recessed at 3:46 p.m.

Tuesday, October 25

Holloman Air Force Base (HAFB) Update (9:02 a.m.)

Colonel Nicholas R. Pederson, vice commander, 49th Wing, HAFB, said that some of the challenges that HAFB is currently facing are adequate housing, schools, spouse employment and child care. Colonel Pederson also gave an overview of HAFB's support of the United States Department of Homeland Security's Operation Allies Welcome, which is an ongoing effort to support vulnerable Afghan nationals as they safely resettle in the United States. The presentation can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/handouts/MVAC%20102422%20Item%207%20Holloman%20AFB%20Update.pdf>.

Consideration of Legislation for Endorsement (9:46 a.m.)

Committee members discussed legislation for endorsement and unanimously endorsed three legislative proposals. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=MVAC&Date=10/24/2022&ItemNumber=8>.

Minutes Approval (10:05 a.m.)

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, and without any objections, the committee approved the minutes of the May 31, 2022, July 14, 2022, August 10, 2022 and September 13, 2022 meetings.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 10:08 a.m.