

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

**October 7, 2024
New Mexico Museum of Space History
3198 State Route 2001
Alamogordo**

The third and final meeting of the Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee was called to order by Representative Harry Garcia, chair, on October 7, 2024 at 10:16 a.m. at the New Mexico Museum of Space History in Alamogordo.

Present

Rep. Harry Garcia, Chair
Sen. Harold Pope, Vice Chair
Rep. Eliseo Lee Alcon
Rep. Art De La Cruz
Sen. Shannon D. Pinto
Rep. Luis M. Terrazas

Absent

Sen. Brenda G. McKenna
Sen. Joshua A. Sanchez

Advisory Members

Rep. John Block
Rep. Debra M. Sariñana

Sen. Craig W. Brandt
Sen. William F. Burt
Rep. Meredith A. Dixon
Rep. D. Wonda Johnson
Rep. Stefani Lord
Rep. Alan T. Martinez
Sen. Michael Padilla
Rep. Andrea Reeb
Rep. Harlan Vincent

Staff

Jeret Fleetwood, Project Coordinator, Legislative Council Service (LCS)
Erin Bond, Researcher, 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 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 agenda items can be found on the recorded webcast for this meeting.

Monday, October 7

Welcome and Introductions (10:16 a.m.)

Representative Garcia welcomed the committee. Members of the committee introduced themselves. Billy Jones, acting director, New Mexico Museum of Space History, welcomed the committee and thanked the International Space Hall of Fame Foundation for its help with the meeting. Johnny Powell, president and chief executive officer, International Space Hall of Fame Foundation, discussed the history of and plans for the museum. Mr. Powell noted the foundation's work with Holloman Air Force Base (HAFB) and the United States Department of Defense STARBASE program to offer science, technology, engineering and mathematics education to fifth grade students in the Tularosa Basin.

Healing America's Heroes (10:27 a.m.)

Eddie Crain, founder, Healing America's Heroes, introduced himself and discussed the history of the organization, which was founded in 2014 and was located in Tierra Amarilla until 2020. Mr. Crain spoke about the organization's recreational therapy programs that are specifically designed for veterans, but he noted that the recent fires in Ruidoso damaged the property, and creative adjustments will be needed. He also discussed his organization's work with the Veterans' Services Department pertaining to remote programs throughout the state.

White Sands Missile Range Update (10:57 a.m.)

Colonel Matthew Johnson, commander, White Sands Test Center, provided insight into the work done at the White Sands Missile Range. Colonel Johnson mentioned that the missile range is located on 2.2 million acres in southern New Mexico and is the only ground-based open air range of the United States Department of Defense. He discussed the work done at the missile range as it relates to nuclear and dynamic testing. He also discussed the missile range's relationship with nearby areas such as Las Cruces, Alamogordo and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and Spaceport America facilities pertaining to testing.

Hunger Among New Mexico Military and Veterans (1:10 p.m.)

Jill Dixon, executive director, The Food Depot, and Katy Anderson, vice president, Strategy, Partnerships and Advocacy, Roadrunner Food Bank, introduced themselves. Ms. Dixon began by discussing how the New Mexico Association of Food Banks (NMAFB) has five food banks that cover all 33 counties in New Mexico. She discussed a line item included in the

Health Care Authority's budget for \$10 million for food purchasing and a special line item in the budget for nonrecurring funding. She requested that the committee support keeping that money in the budget. Additionally, she discussed how 15.2% of New Mexicans are currently food insecure, that seniors and children are the most affected, that active duty military families experience food insecurity at twice the rate of the general public and that veterans struggle with obtaining federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. Ms. Dixon stated that only 8% of veterans in New Mexico are currently receiving SNAP benefits.

Ms. Anderson discussed ways in which the Roadrunner Food Bank is currently assisting active duty military families and how it could use more assistance, specifically with the establishment of food pantry locations and regular food distribution events on or near military bases and at schools with large populations of military-family students. Ms. Anderson also discussed specific policy changes that could contribute to stronger programming, including extending the temporary lodging allowance, more engagement from military leadership on various bases and greater partnerships with the NMAFB and others. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=MVAC&Date=10/7/2024&ItemNumber=3>.

Approval of the Minutes (2:09 p.m.)

On a motion duly made and unanimously approved, the committee adopted the minutes of the September 3, 2024 meeting.

HAFB Update (2:13 p.m.)

Colonel Alfred Rosales, deputy commander, 49th Wing, HAFB, introduced himself and his staff. Colonel Rosales stated that the 49th Wing at HAFB is America's premier training wing with a primary focus on training world-class airmen and air crew for F-16 and MQ-9 aircraft. He mentioned that HAFB is the nation's third largest military base in terms of missions and people, with between 15,000 and 20,000 military families and only 11,000 homes on the base. HAFB is considered remote and isolated, which contributes to problems with access to child care, housing, schools and medical care. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=MVAC&Date=10/7/2024&ItemNumber=4>.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 2:58 p.m.