

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

**August 1, 2019
El Morro Events Center
210 South Second Street
Gallup**

The third meeting of the Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee was called to order by Representative Rodolpho "Rudy" S. Martinez on August 1, 2019 at 9:37 a.m. at El Morro Events Center in Gallup.

Present

Sen. Bill Tallman, Co-Chair
Sen. Craig W. Brandt
Rep. Rodolpho "Rudy" S. Martinez
Sen. Michael Padilla
Rep. Debra M. Sariñana

Absent

Rep. Harry Garcia, Co-Chair
Rep. Rachel A. Black
Sen. William F. Burt

Advisory Members

Rep. Eliseo Lee Alcon
Rep. Joy Garratt
Rep. Jane E. Powdrell-Culbert

Rep. Cathrynn N. Brown
Sen. Carlos R. Cisneros
Rep. Randal S. Crowder
Sen. Richard C. Martinez
Sen. William H. Payne
Rep. G. Andrés Romero

Guest Legislators

Rep. Patricia A. Lundstrom
Rep. Joseph L. Sanchez

Staff

Jeret Fleetwood, Researcher, Legislative Council Service (LCS)
Nancy Martinez, Staff, LCS

Guests

The guest list is in the meeting file.

Handouts

Copies of all handouts and other written testimony are in the meeting file.

Thursday, August 1

Introductions

Committee members and staff introduced themselves.

Welcome

Jackie McKinney, mayor, City of Gallup, welcomed committee members and staff. He said that Gallup won the title of America's Most Patriotic Small Town in Rand McNally's Best of the Road contest. He said that a crucial need for Gallup is to replace the Gallup Indian Medical Center, an aging Indian Health Service hospital, noting that the project has been significantly delayed because of disagreement between the City of Gallup and the Navajo Nation over the location. He said that the project would require \$33 million in federal funds for land acquisition, \$500 million to \$700 million in construction costs and four years to complete. He added that the hospital would also help surrounding states and may have veterans' and behavioral health wings.

Mayor McKinney also talked about the Gallup Veterans Memorial located in front of the McKinley County Courthouse. He explained that the memorial consists of individual columns dedicated to the servicemen and servicewomen of McKinley County and has glass pillars that honor veterans of World War I, World War II, the Korean Conflict, the Vietnam Conflict, Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm, as well as long-serving Senator John Pinto, who was a Navajo Code Talker in World War II. Mayor McKinney mentioned the new Gallup State Veterans Cemetery, which cost \$5.7 million and took 18 months to complete.

In response to questions, Mayor McKinney said that there are three top potential locations for the new hospital and that the priorities are identifying the location and selecting the design. He added that the frequent change of administration of the Navajo Nation has also delayed development of a new hospital because there is no consensus on location.

A motion was made and seconded to have LCS staff draft a letter on behalf of the committee requesting an update from the Indian Health Service regarding the new facility to be located in Gallup.

United States Department of Defense State Liaison Office

Dale Vande Hey, south central region state liaison, State Liaison Office, United States Department of Defense, identified areas of concern that are important to the department, noting that some of the key issues for 2020 are enhancement of military spouse licensure portability, an occupational licencing interstate compact and virtual school enrollment. Military spouse licensure portability approaches are improvements for the short term, he said, and most states have considered this approach through endorsement, temporary licensing and an expedited application process. The long-term solution, he said, would be to have states approve an interstate compact. Mr. Vande Hey said that House Bill 530 (2019), sponsored by Representative Sariñana, waived fees and expedited issuance of certain professional and

occupational licenses for military service members, spouses and their dependent children, but the bill did not pass.

Mr. Vande Hey discussed advance school enrollment for children of military families that relocate. He said that most children cannot be pre-enrolled for school and cannot be admitted into specialized academic programs prior to their physical arrival within the school district boundaries. A desired outcome, he said, would be to temporarily waive proof-of-residency requirements to allow military families to register their children in school prior to arrival in the new district. He also explained that allowing military students to enroll in virtual schools without a residency requirement would assist families facing relocation.

Mr. Vande Hey discussed opportunities for state service providers to connect veterans, service members and families with applicable information and assistance.

In response to committee questions, Mr. Vande Hey said that the length of time for the process for transferring licensure for nurses, doctors and physical therapists is fairly short. He also said that it is vital to have a connection between the military and virtual schools.

Veteran Benefit Issues

Representative Sanchez introduced Rudy C de Baca, lieutenant colonel (retired), United States Air Force, who presented on veterans' benefits. Lieutenant Colonel C De Baca gave a brief description of his background and discussed potential solutions for transition services, including the following:

- funding and resources to have state veterans service officers at each location of the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans and Veterans Resource Center;
- establishment of reasonable time frames for claims to be submitted and approved;
- approval of automatic temporary military sexual trauma disability percentage;
- approval of automatic temporary posttraumatic stress disorder disability percentage;
- establishment of a veterans' center of excellence where veterans can go for retreats, training and counseling; and
- permanently funding state veterans' resource centers at the university level.

Kirtland Partnership Committee

Paul Cassidy, board member, Kirtland Partnership Committee, presented the committee with proposed legislation to consider for endorsement. He said that the intent of the bill is to provide reciprocity of professional licensure and a waiver of licensing fees for military service members, their spouses or their dependent children who are stationed in New Mexico. As of 2016, there were 142,187 veterans living in New Mexico, he said. In that same year, 24 percent of New Mexico veterans reported having a service-connected disability.

Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Initiative

Tom Wagner, Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 996, introduced Eddie Romero, director of publications and media, Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 996, and updated the committee about a project that the chapter is working on. Mr. Romero said that the goal for the chapter is to have a replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C., which displays the names of 58,318 men and women who died in action or were missing in action. Out of that number, 398 were from New Mexico. He said that the total cost of construction of the memorial wall replica is \$300,000. Mr. Romero said that the replica will be located in Angel Fire near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the new Angel Fire State Veterans Cemetery. He said that he is actively getting the word out to the community by making presentations at symposiums and contacting pueblos and veterans' organizations.

In response to questions, Mr. Romero said that:

- capital outlay funds may be sought for the replica memorial wall;
- an agreement is in place with the Veterans' Services Department to have the memorial replica maintained;
- a website detailing plans for the memorial is active; and
- there is no conflict with replicating the Washington, D.C., memorial wall.

Navy League of the United States New Mexico Council

Tom Gutierrez, board president, New Mexico Council of the Navy League, introduced Rebecca Vigil-Giron, former secretary of state, and presented to the committee on New Mexico Council of the Navy League requests to the legislature. Mr. Gutierrez said that the Navy League performs the following functions, some of which the legislature may be requested to help with:

- uniting Navy veterans in New Mexico with the missions, history, accomplishments and work of naval submarines;
- recognizing the University of New Mexico Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps program and the Sea Cadet Corps program;
- providing travel expenses for junior Naval and Marine Reserve Officer Training Corps members attending competitions in New Mexico;
- seeking to name a naval warship after Los Alamos County; and
- seeking to add a pedestal to one of the bells from the USS *New Mexico* that were donated by the United States Navy to the State of New Mexico.

In response to questions, the panel said that past legislation has failed but expressed hope that these issues will be reconsidered with the new administration.

Tour of the Gallup Veterans Memorial and the Gallup State Veterans Cemetery

Jennifer Lazarz, tourism and marketing manager, City of Gallup, gave committee members and staff an overview and tour of the Gallup Veterans Memorial and the Gallup State Veterans Cemetery.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 1:47 p.m.