

REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MINORITY VETERANS



Annual Report

2015

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Letter from the Advisory Committee Chair

The Honorable Robert A. McDonald
Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary McDonald:

I am deeply grateful to serve as the Chairman of the Advisory Committee for Minority Veterans (ACMV). The enclosed 2015 Annual Report includes recommendations which reflect key issues identified by the Committee through briefings received at VA Central Office; a site visit to the VA facilities in the Seattle/Tacoma area and; feedback from the town hall meeting conducted at the VA Puget Sound HCS-American Lake Campus.

The ACMV's 2015 Annual Report is aligned with the objectives of the My VA Initiative. Thus focuses on improving the Minority Veterans experience, achieving support service excellence, ensuring that the Veteran is served in a culture of continuous performance improvement, enhancing strategic partnerships, and improving the employee experience by focusing on the people and culture.

The Advisory Committee was established under PL 103-446 on November 2, 1994. Our responsibilities include:

- Advising the Secretary and Congress
- Providing an annual report
- Meeting with VA Officials, Veterans Service Organizations, and Stakeholders
- Conducting periodic site visits and town hall meetings to address concerns of minority Veterans.

Our report addresses the unique needs of minority Veterans which provides a great opportunity for the improvement of the delivery of services to them and their families. We present our recommendations in the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic and Time limited) format to ensure that we honor the guidance established by the Department of Veterans Affairs. As military demographics continue to change, the Veteran population will become more diverse in terms of race and ethnicity. Based upon the concerns expressed by minority Veterans, they continue to face many challenges within the VA system. Some of these challenges are described as follows:

- (1) Need for Demographic Data: An example of this is unpublished VA utilization information on minority Veterans. Comprehensive data analysis prepares the VA to become more Veteran-Centric in the future. As the percentage of minorities increases in the overall Veteran population, this data will help leadership in the future to plan strategically to improve on utilization of services for minority Veterans. The Department's response to our 2015 recommendation referring to race/ethnicity data indicates that the VA Office of Policy and Planning (OPP) does not have the data needed to identify delivery gaps and potential levels of service for all benefits and utilization programs. This data is currently not collected

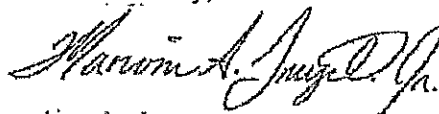
by OPP; the data is primarily collected from other federal agencies or purchased from commercial sources and data collected by VA program offices is incomplete. The Committee strongly encourages the Department to collect race/ethnicity data in a similar manner currently done by the Defense Manpower Data Center and the U.S. Census Bureau.

- (2) Lack of Diversity in Senior Leadership: The Committee has expressed its concern for lack of minorities in senior leadership positions 12 times in the past 20 years. The increasing diversity of the Veteran population and understanding the My VA concept of being more Veteran-Centric, deepens the need for an aggressive program to increase diversity in the VA workforce. You will note that your staff did not disagree with our assessment that further action needs to be taken to enhance diversity in the Department's senior leadership positions.
- (3) Timely Access to Services: An example of this was echoed during our town hall meeting at the American Lake Campus. Veterans from Guam reported extreme hardships in accessing VA healthcare in their homeland. To obtain appropriate healthcare, some of these individuals permanently moved from their Island homes to Washington State and California. It was also noted that there was a need to strengthen VBA services in the region as well. Comprehensive access initiatives need to be further developed to enhance the delivery of VA services to Veterans in insular areas.
- (4) Lack of Awareness of VA Benefits and Services: It is evident that there are many minority Veterans and their families that are still unaware of what is available to them. An example of this was highlighted during our town hall meeting when Veteran spouses exhibited unfamiliarity with National Cemetery Administration (NCA) benefits. The Committee acknowledges that NCA has not published utilization data on minority Veterans. This reinforces the Committee's request for utilization
- (5) data to ensure proper analysis of targeted outreach requirements can be measured to increase awareness.

In closing, ACMV respectfully requests that briefings from VA entities include specific data and recommendations at the next ACMV meeting which is tentatively scheduled for October 2015 in Washington, DC. I extend the Committee's special thanks to the staff of the Center for Minority Veterans for their continued outstanding support of the ACMV.

On behalf of the Committee, I express my sincere appreciation for allowing us the privilege to serve the VA and our Nations minority Veterans.

Sincerely,



Marvin A. Trujillo Jr.

Chairman

Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans

Part I. Executive Summary

The 2015 Report of the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans (ACMV) provides the Committee's observations, recommendations, and rationales that address the effectiveness of the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) delivery of benefits and services to minority Veterans. The report also provides Departmental responses and action plans to address the 2015 ACMV recommendations, and a summary of the progress made on action plans from the 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 ACMV reports.

The ACMV fulfilled its requirement to conduct a minimum of two meetings this year in accordance with Public Law 103-446, and the VA Charter on the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans dated March 27, 2014. The ACMV met on October 28-30, 2014, at VA Central Office (VACO), and conducted a site visit in the Seattle-Tacoma, Washington area from April 21-23, 2015. The meeting at VACO, included briefings from Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), National Cemetery Administration (NCA), and select staff offices. Ex Officio members from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Department of Labor (DOL) provided briefings on their respective missions and services provided to minority Veterans during the VACO meeting. During the Seattle-Tacoma site visit, the ACMV received briefings and facility tours at the VA Puget Sound Health Care System, the Seattle Regional Benefit Office, the Seattle Vet Center, Tahoma National Cemetery, VA Puget Sound American Lake Campus, and the American Lake Sweatlodge. On the afternoon of April 22, 2015, the ACMV and representatives from the VA Puget Sound Health Care System, Tahoma National Cemetery, and Seattle Regional Benefit Office responded to questions from minority Veterans and provided updates on current VA initiatives during a town hall meeting.

Over the past year, the ACMV reviewed information received during our meetings with VA officials, conducted document reviews, and communicated directly with minority Veterans. The Committee strongly believes that the four 2015 recommendations will significantly enhance VA's ability to strategically address the needs of minority Veterans. These recommendations and rationales address the following issues:

- Enhancing data collection processes to include the reporting of race/ethnicity data.
- Accelerate the efforts to improve the diversity of the workforce at the Senior Management level.
- Develop a plan to improve access benefits and services for Veterans residing in the Pacific Rim, Puerto Rico, and US Virgin Islands.
- Enhance the awareness level of burial benefits by specifying on NCA's website the availability of burial space by type and eligibility groups for each cemetery location.

Part II. Summary of 2015 Recommendations

Recommendation #1: That VA enhance its existing data collection processes to include the reporting of race/ethnicity data for all benefits and utilization programs to ensure the identification of delivery gaps and potential disparate levels of service.

Recommendation #2: That VA accelerates efforts to improve the diversity of the workforce at the GS-14, GS-15, and SES levels by establishing benchmarks when possible, and utilizing established diversity management practices.

Recommendation #3: That VA develops an insular catchment area plan that includes service delivery initiatives and benchmarks for the Pacific Rim, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands.

Recommendation #4: That NCA specify on its website availability of burial space by type and eligibility groups for each cemetery location to enhance the awareness level of burial benefits for minority Veterans by the end of FY 2016.

Part III. ACMV 2015 Recommendations, Rationales and VA Responses

Recommendation #1: That VA enhance its existing data collection processes to include the reporting of race/ethnicity data for all benefits and utilization programs to ensure the identification of delivery gaps and potential disparate levels of service.

Rationale: The Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans (ACMV) is required by 38 U.S.C., Section 544, to submit an annual report to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. This report provides an assessment of the needs of Veterans who are minority group members with respect to compensation, healthcare, rehabilitation, outreach, and other benefits and programs administered by the Department.

The ACMV has cited a need for additional data in past reports. The 2012 Minority Veterans Report, prepared by the National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, dated September 2014, provides a partial foundation for assessing the needs of minority Veterans. The Committee has been advised that another Minority Veterans Report, reflecting utilization, is under development but that report has yet to be published.

Comprehensive data analysis prepares the Department to be more Veteran-Centric in the future as the percentage of minorities in the overall Veteran population increases from 21% in 2012 to 34% in 2040, including minority women Veterans.

In the 2014 Annual Report, VHA's response to ACMV's Recommendation #6, that VA assess the impact that prolong clinic wait times may have specifically on minority Veterans, reflected that it was not possible to provide that assessment. It was further noted that it is not mandatory for Veterans to identify their race or ethnicity on any VA form. The National Cemetery Administration is not able to provide the ACMV data which reflects utilization of burial benefits by race and ethnicity. Therefore, the level of targeted outreach needed to increase awareness of burial benefits programs is impossible to determine.

To execute the My VA Initiative calls for VA to be able to identify the race/ethnicity of veterans being served. This has been a long standing practice of major healthcare systems.

The recent Disabled American Veterans report, "Women Veterans: The Long Journey Home," makes the following Key Recommendation #2 - The Federal government should collect, analyze and publish data by gender and minority status for every program that serves Veterans to improve understanding, the monitoring and oversight of programs that serve women Veterans.

If this recommendation was acted upon, the VA would be able to provide the ACMV with a comprehensive report on VA Benefits and services Utilization by Minority Veterans similar to the 2011 Military Service History and VA Benefit Utilization Statistics Women's Veteran Report.

VA Response: Concur in Principle

Concerning Race/Ethnicity Data:

- Office of Policy and Planning (OPP) does not collect race and ethnicity data from Veterans.
- Race and ethnicity data in OPP's possession is primarily collected by other federal entities, including the Defense Manpower Data Center and the U.S. Census Bureau.
- Race and ethnicity data collected by VA program offices is incomplete.

- Over time, the OMB definition for the race and ethnicity categories has changed.
- Some race data and ethnicity data is purchased from a commercial source, but it too is incomplete.

Concerning the Identification of Delivery Gaps and Potential Disparate Levels of Service:

- OPP does not have the data needed to identify delivery gaps and potential disparate levels of service for all benefits and utilization programs.

OPP Action Plan:						
Recommendation #1: OPP will provide the ACMV with a report on selected VA benefits and services utilization by minority Veterans.						
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status	Contact Person
Complete development of the report and review of the current work.	OPP			9/30/2015	Completed	

Recommendation #2: That VA accelerates efforts to improve the diversity of the workforce at the GS-14, GS-15, and SES levels by establishing benchmarks when possible, and utilizing established diversity management practices.

Rationale: The ACMV has highlighted a lack of minorities in senior leadership positions over 12 times in the last 20 years. Approximately one-third of the VA workforce consists of Veterans. Aggressive action is required to address the long standing lack of diversity pattern that exists within the VA workforce structure. The Department has a comprehensive Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan. Some progress has been made in the quest to increase diversity at the senior leadership levels. However, progress has not matched the increasing diversity of the VA workforce or the Veteran stakeholder population that is served by the Department.

In 2003, the Government Accounting Office published GAO-03-34, Senior Executive Service, Enhanced Agency Efforts Needed to Improve Diversity as the Senior Corps Turns Over. The GAO anticipated that half of the 6,100 career SES members employed on October 2001 would leave service by October 2007. Utilizing SES appointment trends at that time, the only significant changes in diversity that was anticipated was an increase in the number of white women and essentially equal decrease in white men. VA was one of the six agencies visited during the course of developing the report. All of the agencies recognized that more would have to be done than in the past if diversity was to be enhanced (Executive Summary). A review of the VA specific charts below reflects VA's Race, Ethnicity, and Gender of SES, GS-14, and GS-15 as of October 2000, September 2003, and September 2014 (Sources: GAO-03-34 and, MD 715 reports 2003 and 2014).

Department of Veterans Affairs-Race and Ethnicity and Gender 2000,2003,&2014

	2000		2003		2014		2003-2014
	SES		SES		SES		Change
Total	247		296		358		62
Male	209	84.62%	240	81.08%	214	59.78%	-26
Female	36	14.57%	56	18.92%	144	40.22%	88
Hispanic Male	3	1.21%	9	3.04%	16	4.47%	7
Hispanic Female	0	0.00%	1	0.34%	4	1.12%	3
White Male	190	76.92%	213	71.96%	170	47.49%	-43
White Female	31	12.55%	47	15.88%	116	32.40%	69
Black Male	12	4.86%	13	4.39%	19	5.31%	6
Black Female	4	1.62%	7	2.36%	18	5.03%	11
Asian American Male	1	0.40%	1	0.34%	6	1.68%	5
Asian American Female	1	0.40%	1	0.34%	4	1.12%	3
Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Male			0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0
Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Female			0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0
American Indian Male	3	1.21%	3	1.01%	2	0.56%	-1
American Indian Female	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	0.28%	1
2 or More Male			1	0.34%	1	0.28%	0
2 or More Female			0	0.00%	1	0.28%	1

Department of Veterans Affairs-Race and Ethnicity and Gender 2000,2003,&2014

GS 15	2000		2003		2014		2003-2014
	GS 15		GS 15		GS 15		Change
Total	7746		12780		24655		11875
Male	5891	76.05%	9295	72.73%	15704	63.69%	6409
Female	1850	23.88%	3485	27.27%	8951	36.31%	5466
Hispanic Male	322	4.16%	513	4.01%	840	3.41%	327
Hispanic Female	131	1.69%	214	1.67%	531	2.15%	317
White Male	4382	56.57%	7047	55.14%	11020	44.70%	3973
White Female	1107	14.29%	2240	17.53%	5288	21.45%	3048
Black Male	173	2.23%	278	2.18%	689	2.79%	411
Black Female	109	1.41%	224	1.75%	697	2.83%	473
Asian American Male	997	12.87%	1423	11.13%	2893	11.73%	1470
Asian American Female	499	6.44%	794	6.21%	2253	9.14%	1459
Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Male			0	0.00%	23	0.09%	23
Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Female			0	0.00%	15	0.06%	15
American Indian Male	17	0.22%	32	0.25%	214	0.87%	182
American Indian Female	4	0.05%	10	0.08%	151	0.61%	141
2 or More Male			2	0.02%	25	0.10%	23
2 or More Female			3	0.02%	16	0.06%	13

Department of Veterans Affairs-Race and Ethnicity and Gender 2000,2003,&2014

	2000		2003		2014		2003-2014
	GS 14		GS 14		GS 14		Change
Total	2475		3935		6994		3059
Male	1691	68.32%	2138	54.33%	3341	47.77%	1203
Female	776	31.35%	1797	45.67%	3653	52.23%	1856
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Hispanic Male	55	2.22%	77	1.96%	131	1.87%	54
Hispanic Female	28	1.13%	63	1.60%	138	1.97%	75
White Male	1465	59.19%	1816	46.15%	2636	37.69%	820
White Female	592	23.92%	1362	34.61%	2600	37.17%	1238
Black Male	98	3.96%	139	3.53%	385	5.50%	246
Black Female	104	4.20%	266	6.76%	723	10.34%	457
Asian American Male	62	2.51%	94	2.39%	157	2.24%	63
Asian American Female	45	1.82%	90	2.29%	144	2.06%	54
Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Male			0	0.00%	2	0.03%	2
Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Female			0	0.00%	7	0.10%	7
American Indian Male	11	0.44%	10	0.25%	24	0.34%	14
American Indian Female	7	0.28%	14	0.36%	32	0.46%	18
2 or More Male			2	0.05%	6	0.09%	4
2 or More Female			2	0.05%	9	0.13%	7

Best practices in diversity management were highlighted in the 2005 Government Accounting Office published GAO-05-90, Diversity Management, Expert-Identified Leading Practices and Agency Examples. This report highlighted the following nine leading diversity management practices, including VA's efforts with succession planning: top leadership commitment, diversity as part of an organization's strategic plan, diversity linked to performance, measurement, accountability, succession planning, recruitment, employee involvement, and diversity training.

VA Response: Concur

ODI concurs with the aforementioned statistics pertaining to recommendation #2 and recommends the following action plans be incorporated into the report.

**ODI Action Plan –
Recommendation #2:**

Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status	Contact Person
These tasks are currently outlined in Part I of VA's Management Directive 715 FY 2014 EEO Report/FY 20015 Plan. d. The plan is to focus on the applicant/selection process for the SES hiring. The responsible parties involved in this plan will be; Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration; Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management; Deputy Assistant Secretary for Office of Diversity and Inclusion; Executive Director for CSEMO, Other Administration HR Officials	ODI	CSEMO	ODI will meet with newly appointed Executive Director of CSEMO to discuss SES applicant flow issues.	12/31/2014	Completed	David Williams/ Georgia Coffey
	ODI	CSEMO	ODI will define capability requirements to integrate SES applicant data into existing system.	5/31/2015	Completed	David Williams/ Thomas Middleton (ODI)
	ODI	CSEMO	ODI will integrate capability requirements into the refined applicant flow system.	12/31/2015	Completed	David Williams/ Thomas Middleton (ODI)
	ODI	CSEMO	ODI will deploy the newly integrated system.	3/31/2016		David Williams/ Thomas Middleton (ODI)
	ODI	CSEMO	ODI will deploy the newly integrated system.	3/31/2016		David Williams/ Thomas Middleton (ODI)
Focus on Leadership Development Programs	CSEMO	VALU, ODI	The Department announced an SES Candidate Development Program (CDP) that is designed to develop a diverse, qualified, certified pool of SES candidates to lead transformation within VA.	9/30/2017	Applications closed in early April. Selections for the program will be announced in late summer	Tia Butler (Executive Director, CSEMO)
	VALU	ODI,	VA will continue to endorse employee participation in the Federal Executive Institute, an executive and management development and training center for governmental leaders that offers values-based leadership development opportunities through residential learning.	9/30/2016	CEDB application process closed in early April 2015; Selections were made for the FY 2015 - 2016 program	George Tanner (VALU)
	ODI	VALU, HRIS, CSEMO	ODI will perform applicant flow analysis of SESCO application/selections process and other applicant process related to leadership development programs, i.e., Corporate Employee Development Board (CEDB),	2/29/2016	waiting on release of applicant information	David Williams/ Thomas Middleton (ODI)
VA's Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) will continue to implement the Department's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) established with the African American Federal Executives Association (AAFEA) and the Asian American Government Executives Network (AAGEN). The MOU builds on collaborations for performing outreach, and leveraging resources for talent management of diverse groups within the Federal sector. It is anticipated that VA's partnership with AAFEA and AAGEN respectively, will encourage and promote more participation from diverse groups in the pipelines for the SES and senior level positions within the Department, and other Federal sector agencies.						
	ODI		As part of the MOU with AAFEA and AAGEN, ODI sponsored a workshop that featured presentations on Executive Core Qualifications and Life in the Senior Executive Service.	9/30/2016	ongoing	Karen Basnight (ODI)
	ODI		For the aforementioned MOU, ODI staff will work towards increasing the cadre of mentors and protégés to enhance professional development opportunities.	9/30/2016	ongoing	Karen Basnight (ODI)
	ODI		Per availability of resources, VA will continue to support the AAGEN Annual Leadership Workshop – this event is designed to provide valuable learning and networking opportunities for all public servants to enhance their professional careers.	9/30/2016	ongoing	Karen Basnight (ODI)

ODI Action Plan – (Continued)						
Recommendation #2:						
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status	Contact Person
	ODI		Per availability of resources, VA will continue to support the AAFFA Annual Training Workshop – this event focuses on the programs, policies, practices, and processes that promote career enhancing opportunities and the core subjects critical for becoming a member of the SES.	10/1/2016	ongoing	Karen Basnight (ODI)
	ODI		Per availability of resources, VA will continue to support employee participation in the League of United Latin American Citizens Convention (LULAC) and Expo/Federal Training Institute (FTI). The LULAC FTI offers a leadership development curriculum that is linked to the five Executive Core Qualifications for the SES.	9/30/2016	ongoing	Karen Basnight (ODI)

Recommendation #3: The VA develops an insular catchment area plan that includes enhanced service delivery initiatives and benchmarks for the Pacific Rim, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands.

Rationale: The 2014-2015 Plan for the Pacific Island Task force did not include the other insular service areas of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. These locales have overall majority minority populations, unique geographical challenges, limited availability of specialty care services, and the inability to utilize the Choice Card Program. The ACMV was provided the goals, agency objectives, strategic activities and benchmarks for the 2014-2015 plans. However, the ACMV has yet to be provided a copy of the Pacific Rim site visit report. Veterans residing in the insular areas lack the option to use the Choice Card to alleviate delays in wait times for appointments or access to specialty care and encounter challenges accessing other VA benefits and services.

During our April 2015 ACMV site visit in the Seattle/Tacoma area, Veterans from Guam reported extreme hardships in accessing VA healthcare in their homelands. To obtain appropriate healthcare, some of these individuals permanently moved from their island homes to Washington State and California. Based on the questions that were asked during the Veterans town hall meeting and inquiries from Veterans residing in Guam, many Veterans were not aware of VA initiatives to enhance their access to VA services.

On May 12, 2015, Roscoe Butler Deputy Director of the American Legion’s Veteran Affairs and Rehabilitation Division presented the Legions’ testimony before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs Subcommittee concerning the Choice Card Program. He noted that, “during a recent Veterans Benefits Center (VBC) visit to Puerto to assess the healthcare system there, local Veterans expressed the frustration they encountered when VHA staff insisted that no one on the island was eligible for health care under the Choice Card Program because there is no medical facility that is further than 40 miles from any VA geographic location on the Island.”

VA Responses:

VBA Response: Concur

VBA Outreach:

VBA is committed to providing outreach to Veterans, survivors, and eligible beneficiaries residing in remote or underserved areas; including but not limited to the Pacific Rim, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. VBA has designated a Minority Veteran Program Coordinator (MVPCs) at each VA regional office (RO) who is responsible to providing outreach to Asian Pacific Islanders, Hispanic, African American, and Native American Veterans. The MVPCs have a comprehensive knowledge of VA programs and perform multiple outreach functions: they attend town hall meetings, and act as liaisons with Federal, state and local agencies, community stakeholders and service providers to increase minority Veterans' awareness. MVPCs also respond to the unique needs of minority Veterans and assist in developing strategies for increasing participation in existing VA benefits programs.

VBA MVPCs partner heavily with their Veterans Health Administration (VHA), National Cemetery Administration (NCA) counterparts and the VHA Office of Rural Health to promote the use of VA benefits, programs and services by minority Veterans. VBA is committed to educating internal staff and external stakeholders about the unique needs of minority Veterans residing in remote locations. VBA participates in ongoing monthly conference calls with the Center for Minority Veterans (CMV), and VHA to discuss outreach trends, and best practices for reaching Veteran populations that are underserved. VBA MVPCs from the Hawaii RO travel to remote islands that their office supports and the San Juan RO send representation to the US Virgin Islands; to conduct effective and efficient outreach to Veterans.

Additionally, VBAs Rural Outreach Program Manager (ROPM), partners with the Mobile Vet Center, County Veteran Service Officer, Transition Assistance Advisors and Community Faith Based Organizations to perform outreach to Veterans residing in remote locations. The ROPM coordinates outreach support for events hosted in rural communities, such as local libraries, job/career fairs, health fairs and rural community forums. Activities at these events include but are not limited to assistance with eBenefits registration, claims assistance and providing comprehensive information on benefits and services. VBA has improved its outreach and benefits counseling to align with the VA Secretary's goal of empowering Veterans to improve their well-being. VBA is also in the process of implementing a new Rural Outreach Coordinator position in each of its 56 regional offices as an additional effort to increase its outreach to Veterans in remote areas.

While VBA's efforts to reach Veterans in rural areas have been steadfast, there is always opportunity for improvement. VBA will continue to increase outreach-hours and improve partnerships with Veterans service organizations, other organizations within VA, and other federal, state, and local partners.

Improved Access:

In addition to in-person outreach, Veterans now have improved access to benefits information from multiple channels – on the phone, online, and through our shared Department of Defense (DoD)/VA portal eBenefits. From FY 2009 to FY 2015, the number of contacts with VA through these channels increased from 9.1 million to more than 68.3 million.

Currently, VA has over 5 million eBenefits users. With over 55 self-service options, users can file benefit claims online in an easy-to-use, prompt-based system. Veterans can also upload supporting claims information that feeds into VA's paperless claims processing system; intent to file, fully developed claims filing, check the status of claims or appeals; review their VA payment history; and obtain military documents, among other actions.

The Stakeholder Enterprise Portal (SEP) is a secure, Web-based entry point that complements eBenefits and gives Veterans service organizations and other authorized advocates access to assist Veterans with electronic claim submissions. Using the portal, registered users can check the status of claims, review payment history, and upload documentation on behalf of the Veterans they represent — all within a digital environment.

Telephone systems improvements have also increased access to benefits information and services. Eight call centers now utilize a consolidated queue to improve efficiency and utilization of call agents. The consolidated queue allows calls to be routed to the next available agent with the appropriate skill set. Veterans and other callers have also benefited from the Virtual Hold feature, which automatically calls the individual back. Additionally, callers have the option to pick a date and time for VA to call back.

VBA has also improved the tools call agents use. Unified Desktop technology at the National Call Centers combined 13 separate applications into one consolidated view of the Veteran. Call agents can now access the caller's contact history and utilize "smart scripts" to provide quick, consistent, and high-quality responses to callers.

VBA Action Plan – Recommendation #3						
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status	Contact Person
<p>Designate a Rural Outreach Coordinator (ROC) at each regional office, who is responsible for conducting effective and efficient outreach activities.</p> <p>Explore and Conduct Non-Traditional methods of outreach; in order to reach, inform, educate, and empower Veterans who reside in remote areas such as the Pacific Rim, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands.</p>	VBA	Benefits Assistance Service, Office of Field Operations & VBA District Offices	Designate ROCs at each VA regional office	FY 2016; 2 nd Quarter	In Progress	
	VBA	Benefits Assistance Service, Office of Field Operations & VBA District Offices	<p>Step 1 - Create information packets/guides specifically for the targeted areas.</p> <p>Step 2 - Conduct outreach via telephone and email correspondence.</p> <p>Step 3 - Conduct “Twitter Town Halls”, increase Facebook and InstaGram posts, and develop and promote Youtube videos targeting Veterans in rural/ remote areas and islands.</p>	FY 2016; 3 rd Quarter	In Progress	
						In Progress

VHA Response: Concur

The VA Pacific Islands Health Care System has been privileged to provide medical care services to Guam’s Veterans since the early 1980s. From an initial staff of 5 we have grown to 43 staff members, including 10 physicians, both on board and planned, caring for approximately 3,860

enrolled Guam Veterans. The VA Guam Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC), located next to the Naval Hospital in Hagatna, provides primary care, mental health, women's health care, specialty care such as Endocrinology, Gastroenterology, Podiatry, and Polytrauma/Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) services, both on island by visiting VA providers, and through tele health, and home based primary care services. For example, teledermatology is also provided by Dermatologists at the San Francisco VA. VA also has agreements with the Naval Hospital for emergency care, acute inpatient care, and some specialty services. Some Veterans requiring off island referrals such as to Oahu and Tripler Army Medical Center are assisted, if eligible, by VA Beneficiary Travel support to help defray costs. In FY '14 for instance there were 479 trips totaling \$ 1.43M. These include both commercial air and special air ambulance transportation.

Currently, the provision of primary care services is accomplished by two permanent primary care providers, and the equivalent of two more providers via visiting physicians. We have one newly hired replacement provider starting in mid-October and for the past six months experienced VA providers from Honolulu have provided care at the clinic. Contracted physician support is also available if needed. There will be no interruption of primary care services during this period. With this new hire five dedicated primary care providers will be furnishing care at the CBOC.

Mental health services at the CBOC are currently provided by two psychiatrists, a nurse practitioner, social worker and a psychologist position under recruitment. Services include psychiatric evaluations, medication management and a wide range of evidenced based psychotherapies. Individual and group therapy is provided for care of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anger management, stress management and coping skills for Veterans with substance abuse disorders and PTSD.

The award of a VA Office of Rural Health grant has enabled us to begin offering Veterans VA delivered primary and mental health care services more conveniently in both the North and South Guam areas. The Team cares for Veterans twice weekly at existing community health centers and includes a primary care provider, psychiatrist, registered nurse, and a medical support assistant. Our home based primary care services involving a physician, nurse practitioner, registered nurses, social worker, and an occupational therapist provide care to approximately thirty-five Veterans with medically complex needs in the comfort of their own homes.

Other new faces at the CBOC will include a pharmacist under recruitment, dividing their time between the CBOC and Naval Hospital, for education and consultation both with Veterans and staff, a social worker on-board conducting outreach and improved coordination of services for our newest Veterans from Operations Enduring Freedom/Iraqi Freedom/New Dawn, along with a Diabetes Nurse Educator and a Nurse Care Coordinator within the hospital.

Other on-island VA services involve our Homeless Veteran Program including two social workers and two peer specialists who provide outreach, case management, and referral services. The Housing and Urban Development - VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program provides thirty-six vouchers to assist eligible Veterans to obtain housing. We are also working toward the establishment of a five-bed emergency housing program and a Veterans' Treatment Court.

VA officials have also met recently with the University of Guam Department Heads and are seeking to establish traineeships which will allow University of Guam students in the programs of nursing, social work and public health disciplines such as pre physical therapy, nutrition and health promotion to gain valued experience at the CBOC, and in Homecare and Outreach Settings.

We continually strive to provide Veteran-centered care by a well-coordinated and dynamic multidisciplinary team approach and we encourage Veterans to be an active participant in their healthcare via computer by visiting MyHealthVet.com where they can utilize secure messaging to communicate health needs to their provider, check on their appointments, refill prescriptions and obtain other useful information.

We've come a long way from our inception in the 1980s and all the VA staff in Guam and Honolulu are honored to serve the Veteran community on Guam.

The Clinic is located at 498 Chalan Palasyo, Agana Heights, Guam 96910, and may be reached at (671) 475-5760.

Key Data (FY '14):

Guam Enrolled Veterans: 3,864

Individual Veterans Treated at CBOC: 2,569

Outpatient Visits: 15,908

OIF/OEF/OND Veterans: 664

Women Veterans: 206

Guam Naval Hospital Veteran ADC: 3

Primary Care Avg. Appt. Wait Time: 16 days (will decrease with addition of 2 permanent PCPs as described above)

Mental Health Avg. Appt. Wait Time: 1 day.

Veterans who are eligible for VA healthcare and reside in a State or a United States Territory without a full-service VA medical facility that provides hospital care, emergency services, and surgical care having a surgical complexity of standard, and reside more than 20 miles from such a VA medical facility for Veterans Choice Card (VCP). This criterion applies to Veterans residing in Guam, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. We are working to address any confusion about eligibility for Choice in these locations. Steps we are taking to reduce confusion and increase use of the VCP are reflected in the task chart below: Unlike the above-listed territories, Puerto Rico has a VA medical facility that provides hospital care, emergency services, and surgical care having a surgical complexity of standard. Veterans in Puerto Rico are eligible for VCP if VA is unable to provide an appointment within the wait-time goals of VHA, reside more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest VA medical facility, need to travel by plane or boat to that facility, or face an unusual or excessive burden in traveling to that facility. Recent amendments to VACAA provide VA greater flexibility to determine eligibility based on burden in travel.

VHA Action Plan –

Recommendation #3:

Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status	Contact Person
<p>Mail Choice Cards to eligible Veterans</p> <p>Tri-West Call Center to be established in Hawaii to handle all Pacific Choice calls April 2015</p> <p>Tri West Call Center to be fully operational w/ 40 personnel operating from 7 am – 7 pm, M-F, HST</p> <p>Multiple Newspaper, radio and TV information actions on going to get the word out to Veterans in these impacted areas on free use of Choice Card.</p> <p>VAPIHCS is continuing to increase access to care for Insular Veterans through enhanced use of specialty provider visits and VTEs plus a new Rural Health Extension Team, has been established on Am Samoa to take both Pri care and MH care to our most rural Veterans on Am Samoa and a similar team has been established on Guam to take care to our most rural Veterans on Guam and on Saipan.</p>			<p>Choice Cards mailed to all eligible Veterans in Insular US Territories</p> <p>Notification of change</p> <p>Call Center to be opened in April '15 to be fully operational by Jul '15</p>	<p>Dec '14 – Jan '15</p> <p>Mar '15</p> <p>Jun '15</p> <p>Jul '15</p> <p>On-going</p> <p>Summer '15</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>On-going</p> <p>In Progress</p>	

NCA Response: Concur in Principle

State and territorial cemeteries have been established in Guam, Saipan, Aguadilla and Puerto Rico. NCA provides headstones, markers, and Presidential Memorial Certificates to the U.S. Virgin Islands and to any deceased eligible Veteran in any cemetery around the world. Currently, NCA has two applications pending for the establishment of territorial cemeteries in the U.S. Virgin Islands (St. Thomas and St. Croix); however, they are not actionable at this time because legislation has not been approved and the two territories have not set aside the 10 percent matching funds required by CFR 38 Part 39. NCA also plans to expand burial services to Veterans in Puerto Rico by opening a facility in Morovis by 2020. The cemetery will provide a national cemetery burial option to Veterans for decades.

NCA Action Plan – Recommendation #3:						
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status	Contact Person
The Veterans Cemetery Grants Program will periodically check the status of the pending applications for approval to establish state cemeteries in the U.S. Virgin Islands.	Veteran Cemetery Grants (40A3)	N/A	Periodically check the status of pending applications	Ongoing	In progress	George Eisenbach

Recommendation #4: NCA specify on its website availability of burial space by type and eligibility groups for each cemetery location to enhance the awareness level of burial benefits for minority Veterans by the end of FY 2016.

Rationale: The ACMV has highlighted the need for additional targeted outreach and NCA has constantly made efforts to increase this outreach. The ability of NCA officials at national cemeteries to conduct targeted outreach to minority Veterans is hampered by the size of their geographical catchment areas, the small number of individuals assigned at these locations, and their constant workload.

On the VA website, individual VA national cemeteries indicate their available capacity by indicating "Burial Space - This cemetery has space available to accommodate casketed and cremated remains." Note: This is generally the first place that eligible beneficiaries look for information on national cemeteries in their area.

At the recent Veterans town hall meeting conducted by the ACMV, only approximately half of those attending were aware that Veteran spouses and in some cases, dependent children were eligible for burial in national cemeteries. Individuals stated that after hearing that spouses and in some cases,

dependent children of Veterans could be buried in national cemeteries, that they would now consider that option.

Making the suggested change to the NCA web sites would be a workload neutral effort that provides an additional means of raising awareness of burial benefits.

VA Response: Concur

NCA Action Plan – Recommendation #4:						
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status	Contact Person
NCA plans to review the web pages for each cemetery.	Communications & Outreach (43A2)		1. Clarify that 'open', cemeteries are defined as open to first interments of Veterans, their spouses and minor children. 2. Clarify that 'closed' is defined as no first interments of burial space is available unless we can accommodate burial of eligible individuals in the same gravesite of previously interred family members.	Ongoing	In progress	Mike Nacincik

Part IV. Agenda - Washington, D.C. Departmental Briefings

**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MINORITY VETERANS (ACMV)**

October 28 - 30, 2014
VA Central Office
810 Vermont Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20420

AGENDA

Tuesday – October 28, 2014 (VACO Room 230)

8:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.	Opening Remarks & Review Agenda	Ms. Barbara A. Ward, DFO Mr. Marvin Trujillo, Chairman
8:30 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.	VA Advisory Committee Management	Mr. Jeffrey Moragne AC Management Officer
8:45 a.m. - 9:15 a.m.	VA Ethics Briefing	Mr. Jonathan Gurland Attorney
9:15 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.	Break	
9:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	Center for Minority Veterans	Ms. Barbara Ward, Director
10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	Mental Health Services	Dr. Susan McCutcheon National MH Director

Topics:

- Update on current initiatives to address mental health needs of minority Veterans.

11:00 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.	Office of Health Equity	Dr. Uchenna Uchendu Executive Director
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Topics:

- Update on current OHE initiatives.

11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch on Your Own	
1:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.	National Center for Veterans Analysis	Dr. Tom Garin, Office of Policy & Planning

Topics:

- Provide a review of the September 2014 Minority Veterans Report.
- Update on Data collection efforts.
- Update on the proposed Minority Veterans Utilization Report.

1:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. Office of Tribal Government Relations Ms. Stephanie Birdwell
Director

Topics:

- Provide an update on OTGR's current initiatives.

2:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Legislative Affairs Service-OCLA Mr. David Ballenger, Director

Topics:

- Provide an overview of VA's Legislative Process reference the operational role VA takes when the House and Senate Committees on Veterans Affairs introduce and pass Congressional Bills.

2:30 p.m. - 2:45 p.m. BREAK

2:45 p.m. - 3:45 p.m. Veterans Benefits Administration Mr. Robert Reynolds, Director
Benefits Assistance Services

Topics:

- Update on Recommendation #3, 2014 ACMV Report, Schedule for Rating Disabilities.
- Overview of the top 5 claimed conditions and lessons learned on women Vet claims (reference VBA response to 2013 ACMV Report, Recommendation #5).
- Update of transformation initiatives.
- Review of the Native American Direct Home Loan stats.
- Update on "targeted outreach initiatives" to minority Veterans.

3:45 p.m. – 4:15 p.m. Committee After Action Review & Mr. Marvin Trujillo, Chair
Sub-Committee Notes

4:15 p.m. - 4:45 p.m. Sub-Committee Discussions

4:45 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Wrap Up

5:00 p.m. Adjourn

**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MINORITY VETERANS (ACMV)**

October 28 – 30, 2014
VA Central Office
810 Vermont Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20420

AGENDA

Wednesday – October 29, 2014 (VACO Room 230)

8:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.	Opening & Review Agenda	Mr. Marvin Trujillo, Chairman
8:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.	CMV Updates	Mr. Earl Newsome, Deputy Director

Topics:

- Overview of CMV initiatives and ACMV Recommendations
- Overview of MVPC outreach activities

9:00 a.m. - 9:45 a.m.	National Cemetery Administration	Ms. Kimberly Wright Director of Field Programs
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Topics:

- Update on Recommendation #1, 2014 ACMV Report, reference MVPC's.
- Update on Recommendation #4, 2014 ACMV Report, reference State Flags.
- Update on Recommendation #9, 2012 ACMV Report reference NCA's Action Plan.
- Review of current NCA initiatives that focus on access/utilization of burial benefits by minority Veterans.
- Review of Native American Cemetery Grant Program utilization.
- Update on "targeted outreach initiatives" to minority Veterans.

9:45 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	VA Remarks and Photo Op	The Honorable Jose D. Riojas Chief of Staff
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11:00 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.	Break	
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11:15 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.	Veterans Employment	Mr. Dennis May, Deputy Director, Veteran Employment Services Office
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Topics:

- Demographic review of Veteran hires and retention.
- Update of the VESO Work Group on regrettable losses (reference 2013 ACMV Report, Recommendation #4).

11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch on Your Own	
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1:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.	Office of Diversity & Inclusion	Ms. Georgia Coffey, Deputy Assistant Secretary for
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Diversity and Inclusion

Topics:

- Update on ODI's initiatives, to include, lack of minorities in SES/Senior Leadership positions.
- Discuss outcome of applicant flow review and resulting barrier analysis update.

1:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. Office of Rural Health Ms. Gina Capra, Director

Topics:

- Update on the VAIHS MOU, to include the Level of Veteran Utilization and the amount of money expended on reimbursement of the program.
- Update on VHA's 2014 tour of the Pacific Rim.
- Outreach efforts in rural and insular areas.

2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. Veterans Health Administration Dr. James A. Tuchschiidt
Principal Deputy Under Secretary
for Health

Topics:

- Update on VHA's "Accelerating Access to Care Initiative" that was reported under Recommendation #6, ACMV 2014 Report.
- Update on "targeted outreach initiatives" to minority Veterans.
- Review of current VHA initiatives that focus on access/utilization of health benefits by minority Veterans.
- Impact of ACA and non-VA Provider Care Authorization on minority Veterans.

3:00 p.m. - 3:15 p.m. Break

3:15 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Homeless Veterans Ms. Danielle Latimore
LCSW, Executive
Assistant, VHA
Homeless Programs

Topics:

- Demographic review of homeless Veterans.
- Outreach in minority communities.
- Update on Homeless Initiative, 2015 deadline.

4:00 p.m. - 4:45 p.m. Sub-Committee Discussions Mr. Marvin Trujillo, Chair

4:45 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. Wrap Up

5:00 p.m. Adjourn

**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MINORITY VETERANS (ACMV)**

October 28 – 30, 2014

VA Central Office

810 Vermont Ave., NW, Washington, D.C.

AGENDA

Thursday – October 30, 2014 (VACO Room 230)

8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.	Opening and Agenda	Mr. Marvin Trujillo, Chairman
9:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.	Vet Centers	Mr. Tommy Stewart MS,RN,NP, Acting Readjustment Counseling Service Chief Officer

Topics:

- Update on Vet Centers' Program Initiatives.

9:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	Ex-Officios Update	Gordon Burke (DOL) Bret Stevens (DOD) Alexis Bakos (HHS)
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Topics:

- Update on departmental initiatives effecting minority Veterans.

10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.	Public Comments	Open to the public
10:15 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	Leadership Exit Briefing	VHA, VBA, & NCA
11:00 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.	Break	
11:15 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Sub-Committee Meetings	Mr. Marvin Trujillo, Chairman
12:00 p.m. - 12:45 p.m.	Committee After Action Report	Mr. Marvin Trujillo, Chairman
12:45 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Wrap Up	
1:00 p.m.	Adjourn	

Part V. Agenda - Seattle Tacoma Site Visit

**Department of Veterans Affairs
Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans
Seattle, Washington Site Visit 2015**

AGENDA

Monday, April 20, 2015

Travel Day

Tuesday, April 21, 2015

7:30 a.m.

Assemble in Hotel Lobby/Board Bus

7:30 a.m. - 8:00 a.m.

Travel to VA Puget Sound Health Care System
Building 1, Room 240
1660 South Columbian Way, Seattle, WA 98108

8:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.

Meet/Greet VA Puget Sound HCS Staff
VA Puget Sound HCS Lobby
Assemble in Meeting Room 240

8:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.

Opening remarks, Admin. & Prepare for
VA Puget Sound HCS Briefing

Barbara Ward, DFO
Marvin Trujillo, Jr., Chairman

9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

VA Puget Sound HCS Briefing

Gary Bayne, Acting Director Nursing
Cathy Davidson, MVPC

Topics:

Outreach to Minority Veterans (MVPC)
Women & Homeless Veterans
Leadership Training Programs
Specialty Care of Alaska Veterans
Wounded Warrior Program
Home Based Primary Care Program

11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

VAMC Tour (Tour closed to the Public)

12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Lunch in VA Puget Sound HCS Canteen (on your own)

1:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Board Bus/Travel to Seattle Regional Benefit Office
Jackson Federal Building, 915 2nd Ave., Seattle

1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Seattle Regional Benefit Office Briefing/
Jackson Federal Building
915 2nd Ave., Seattle, WA 98174

Pritz Navaratasingam, Director
Robert Hard, MVPC

Topics:

Outreach to Minority Veterans (MVPC)
Women & Homeless/Incarcerated Veterans
Leadership Training Programs
Intake Sites

**Department of Veterans Affairs
Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans
Seattle, Washington Site Visit 2015**

AGENDA

Catchment Area Discussion
Claims Processing
Home Loan Program & Transformation Initiatives
VARO Tour (Tour closed to the Public)

3:00 p.m. - 3:15 p.m. Break

3:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Assemble/Board Bus to Seattle Vet Center

3:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Travel to Seattle Vet Center
4735 E. Marginal Way S, Room 1103, Seattle, WA 98134

4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Seattle Vet Center Briefing/Tour (Tour closed to the Public)

5:00 p.m. – 5:15 p.m. Assemble/Board Bus for Hotel

Wednesday, April 22, 2015

7:30 a.m. Assemble in Hotel Lobby/Board Bus

7:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. Travel to Tahoma National Cemetery
18600 SE 240th Street, Kent, WA 98042

9:00 a.m. - 9:15 a.m. Meet/Greet NCA Staff
Assemble in Meeting Room

9:15 a.m. - 10:15 a.m. Tahoma Nat'l Cemetery Briefing/Tour Mr. Thomas Yokes, Director
Donnetta Coleman, MVPC

10:15 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. Assemble/Board Bus to American Lake Area

11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Tour of American Lake Campus
(In Vicinity of Sweatlodge/VA Puget Sound HCS – American Lake)
9600 Veterans Drive, Tacoma, WA 98493

12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. Canteen – American Lake Campus
(VA Puget Sound HCS – American Lake)
9600 Veterans Drive, Tacoma, WA 98493

1:30 p.m. - 1:45 p.m. Travel to Sweatlodge
(In Vicinity of VA Puget Sound HCS – American Lake)
9600 Veterans Drive, Tacoma, WA 98493

2:00 p.m. - 3:15 p.m. Sweatlodge Briefing – Building 8, Room 323
Tour of Sweat Lodge – American Lake

**Department of Veterans Affairs
Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans
Seattle, Washington Site Visit 2015**

AGENDA

- 3:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Assemble/Board Bus to Town Hall Meeting-Building 9 (Auditorium)
VA Puget Sound HCS-American Lake Division
9600 Veterans Drive, Tacoma, WA 98493
- 3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. Prep for Town Hall Meeting-Building 9 (Auditorium)
- 4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. Town Hall Meeting Barbara Ward, DFO
Marvin Trujillo, Jr., Chairman
- 6:30 p.m. – 6:45 p.m. Assemble/Board Bus for Hotel

Thursday, April 23, 2015

- 7:30 a.m. Assemble in Hotel Lobby/Board Bus
- 7:30 a.m. - 8:00 a.m. Travel to VA Puget Sound HCS
Building 1, Room 240
1660 South Columbian Way, Seattle, WA
- 8:00 a.m. - 8:15 a.m. Meet/Greet VA Puget Sound HCS Staff VA Puget Sound HCS Lobby
Assemble in Meeting Room 240
- 8:15 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. Committee after Action Review & Barbara Ward, DFO
Marvin Trujillo, Jr., Chairman
Sub-committee Notes
Prepare for Exit Briefing
- 10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. Public Comments
- 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Conduct Exit Briefing
VBA Leadership – Mr. Pritz Navaratasingam, Director
VHA Leadership – Mr. Gary Bayne, Acting Director Nursing
NCA Leadership – Mr. Thomas Yokes, Director
- 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. Lunch in VA Puget Sound HCS Canteen (on your own)
- 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Work on ACMV 2015 Report (1st Draft) Marvin Trujillo, Jr., Chairman
- 4:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. Administrative Paperwork
- 4:30 p.m. – 4:45 p.m. Adjourn Meeting
- 4:45 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Assemble/Board Bus to Hotel

Friday, April 24, 2015

Travel Day

Part VI. Town Hall Meeting - Tacoma, Washington

The ACMV hosted a Veterans Town Hall Meeting at the VA Puget Sound HCS-American Lake Division. Attendance was high with approximately 75 attendees. The town hall provided a venue for Veterans questions and comments. It also provided local VA officials an opportunity to provide Veterans updates on current initiatives in their catchment areas. Local VA officials from the VA Puget Sound Health Care System, Seattle Regional Benefit Office, and Tahoma National Cemetery, joined the Advisory Committee at this event. Veterans in attendance expressed concern about the lack of adequate health care services for Veterans in Guam. Many Veterans were frustrated with the WWII Filipino Compensation Fund because family members were concerned that WWII Filipino Veterans will die prior to obtaining approval of benefits earned through the Compensation Fund. They also identified a need for more targeted outreach, and showed an interest in more research on Mental Health issues on minority Veterans. Several statements were also made that referenced Veteran reimbursement for emergency care sought outside of the VA Healthcare System, travel claim payments and mileage reimbursement should be via the Veterans bank account or personal check mailing process, homeless Veterans need coordination of services which includes single male parents with children, and spouses of Veterans were not aware of their eligibility for burial in national cemeteries.

Part VII. Exit Briefing with VA Puget Sound HCS, Seattle Regional Benefit Office and Tahoma National Cemetery

Pritz Navaratasingam, Director, Seattle Regional Office:

- Chair provided the Sub-Work Group notes.
- Follow-up question – reference their strategy for outreach.
- Director will look at coming up with an Action Plan reference outreach.
- Commends the MVPC – reference MVPC as a collateral duty.
 - Must be a total team effort, working with the other admins to meet the needs of their minority Veterans.
 - Will start quarterly meetings with tribal representatives.
 - Work with community partners - strategy for targeted outreach – fostering those working relationships – Director’s personal commitment.
- Data/Metrics – will look at key metrics reference processing claims.
 - Backlog of claims is now below 200,000 – for Seattle area, around 5000 claims.
 - 3,300 appeals pending and working to reduce these appeals.
 - Repeals/Claims need to be filed with standardized forms-recent mandate in March.
- Going to track their successes in outreaching to minority Veterans.
- Sub-Group Remarks
 - Reducing their backlog on claims.
 - % of broker claims – Director will get the information reference “workload distribution.”
 - Claims 95% electronic – any chance in future, algorithms will be part of VBA. Director reference electronic system – enhancing the process – people are their most valuable asset.

Gary Bayne, Acting Director of Nursing, VA Puget Sound HCS:

- Accolades to MVPC.
- Reference employment for homeless – do not have the process to take all the services to the streets.
- Reference collaboration with other agencies because VHA cannot do everything. VHA does include other agencies during their outreach events.
- Reference strategy in reducing wait times – In primary care, have 75,000 patients, an issue can be keeping their doctors (Primary Care doctors) on staff – competing for doctors with the whole nation. Allowing float positions – having doctors help in other positions.
- Reference Choice Cards to reduce those wait times – utilization of the Choice Cards has not met VHA’s expectations. Success is at 21% - Choice Card is working for a lot of Veterans but there is a lot of Veterans who are not using the Choice Card – the process does take long. Have a Choice Card Call Center which is a local initiative – need to make the Choice Card Call Center a national initiative.
 - Receive 20 – 40 calls per day.

Thomas Yokes, Director, Tahoma National Cemetery:

- MVPC very engaged.
- Outreach to rural Veterans was low – MVPC collateral duty.

- Reference employees working with the loss on a daily basis; is there any counseling for the employees? Director – Chaplain Services are provided, rotate the services provided among the employees.

Committee Comments:

- The Admins do partner.
- Committee recommended continuing their work with their stakeholders.

APPENDIX A: Action Plans Follow Up

Roll Up of Open ACMV Reports Action Plans 2012-2014 Update Spreadsheets

**2014 Action Plan Update Spreadsheet
ACMV 2014 Report Action Plan**

Report Year	Recommendations	Program Office	Page	Current Status as of 1 July 2014	Projected Completed Date (Date/NA)
2014	Recommendation #1	NCA		Concur	FY2015
2014	*Recommendation #2	ODI		Completed	On Going follow up actions being taken
2014	Recommendation #3	VBA		Concur	FY 2017
2014	*Recommendation #4	NCA		Ongoing	FY 2015

***See Narrative for additional updates as of July 2015.**

Recommendation #1: That the VA establish a standard that requires the Minority Veterans Program Coordinators (MVPCs) Program in catchment areas that are geographically-extended over 200 miles, to assign the appropriate percentage of duties to an employee(s) in VHA and VBA facilities outside of the respective host VA Regional Office (VARO) and VA Medical Center (VAMC) locations.

NCA Response: Concur

On July 17, 2014, the NCA EEO Office conducted an outreach communications plan meeting. Attending parties included the NCA MVPC Liaison, the NCA EEO Director, the NCA Outreach Coordinator, and a representative from the Center for Minority Veterans. Items discussed during the meeting included: providing NCA MVPC's with a listing of other MVPC's in their catchment areas as a method to increase outreach opportunities to Minority Veterans and to improve the efficient usage of Departmental outreach resources, and providing NCA MVPC's with a quarterly outreach opportunities listing in order to increase the level of outreach to minority Veterans. Other discussion points included having MVPC's from the different administrations form outreach teams to formulate outreach strategies and share materials to disseminate at outreach events. Finally, MVPCs will be required to include collaborations with VHA and VBA counterparts on the operations plans included with the MVPC Quarterly Reports.

			<p>body systems Concurrence phase: Review and approval of proposed changes prior to publication as a proposed rule in Federal Register</p> <p>Internal Concurrence : Four systems remain in internal concurrence: Musculoskeletal, Respiratory, ENT, and Mental Disorders</p> <p>VBA Leadership: Seven Systems: Cardiovascular, Genitourinary, Skin, Infectious Diseases, Digestive, Dental and Oral, Neurological and Convulsive Disorders</p> <p>OGC, O2Reg and OMB 4 Systems: Endocrine, Hematologic and Lymphatic, Special Senses: Eye, Gynecological and Breast: (Prepublication)</p>	<p>Complete all systems by 2017</p>	<p>In Progress</p> <p>In Progress</p> <p>In Progress</p>
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Recommendation #4: That the VA direct that all VA National Cemeteries prominently display the District of Columbia and insular flags of all United States territories as they do flags from the 50 states.

NCA Action Plan – Recommendation #: 4						
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status	Contact Person
Research by the Office of Field Programs indicates that 27 cemeteries currently display state flags on commemorative days. Twenty cemeteries would need to purchase, or request donations, to acquire the additional flags needed to comply with the proposed revision. Some cemeteries may be required to construct additional flag poles as well.	NCA Field Programs		Issue a field notice and update NCA Directive 3220 to reflect: For the purpose of this directive, the term State flags include the flags of all 50 states of the United States and the flags of the United States territories and the District of Columbia.	FY 2015	In Progress	

**2013 Action Plan Update Spreadsheet
ACMV 2013 Report Action Plan**

2013 Action Plan Update Spreadsheet

Report Year	Recommendations	Program Office	Page	Current Status as of 1 July 2014	Projected Completed Date (Date/NA)
2013	Recommendation #1	VHA, VBA, NCA		Concur in Principle	NA
2013	Recommendation #2	ODI		Completed	Ongoing follow up actions being taken
2013	Recommendation #3	VHA		Concur In Principle	NA
2013	*Recommendation #4	VESO		Completed	April 2015
2013	*Recommendation #5	VBA		Completed	*See response to recommendation #1 of 2015 ACMV Report
		OPP		Completed	*See response to recommendation #1 of 2015 ACMV Report

***See Narrative for additional updates as of July 2015.**

Recommendation #4: That the VA Office of Human Resources and Administration develop a methodology to determine the reasons/causes of removals/terminations (regrettable losses) of recently hired Veterans by the end of Fiscal Year 2014.

Rationale: According to the Fiscal Year 2012 Veterans Hire Demographics, Separations report, there were a total of 6,747 removals, resignations and terminations from VA employment. In the briefings presented, the reasons for this high number were unknown. Therefore, VA needs identify to why 40% of newly hired Veterans leave VA employment within 12 months of being hired. Although the latest unemployment rates for Veterans are improving, minority Veterans continue to lag behind in terms of employment. Therefore, it becomes important for VA to focus on its retention of Veterans.

A review of several studies which addressed employee retention indicated that recruiting and hiring a new employee could range from 50-150% of the annual salary of a retained employee.^{5,6} Therefore, retention is crucial in containing recruitment costs, while significantly contributing to lowering unemployment rates of deserving Veterans.

Further reported research for companies that used exit interviews or questionnaires with departing employees revealed the following information: the primary reasons for leaving were poor relationships and/or communications with one's supervisor, poor quality of co-worker or customer relationships, need for more work/life balance and low levels of employee engagement.

VA Response: Concur

As stated in the 2011 Action Plan Recommendation 4*, Veterans Employment Services Office (VESO) provided an update and status report to the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans (ACMV). VESO has reviewed Veterans employment data and has contracted to have a Veterans Retention Study completed by first quarter of Fiscal Year 2014.

VESO Action Plan – Recommendation #:4						
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status	Contact Person
VESO contracted to have a Retention Study done by end of FY 14	VESO (OO6VE)			FY16, 1 st Qtr	Ongoing	

***VA Response:** A Retention Study was conducted and completed by VESO (contractor PDRI) and as a result of the findings from this study; a Veterans Retention Working was sanctioned by the Assistant Secretary in April of 2015 with the following objectives:

- 1) Develop, integrate and coordinate plans to identify Veteran staff retention issues/gaps.
- 2) Develop, integrate and coordinate strategies and high level plans for increased Veteran staff retention.

Status: The Veterans Retention Working Group will provide the Assistant Secretary of HR&A an overview and recommendations to increase Veteran retention at the beginning of the first quarter of FY16.

Recommendation # 5: That VA expedite the collection and analysis of demographic data on minority Veterans to determine if disparities exists in the top five claimed conditions, grant rate for disability claims, and percentages of disability granted, and publish a report similar to the review that was recently completed on women Veterans by 2015.

Rationale: The availability and utilization of race/ethnic data will assist the VA to respond to the requirements of 38 U.S.C. section 544(c), which requires the ACMV to make "such recommendations

(including recommendations for administrative and legislative action) as the Committee considers appropriate, and 38 U.S.C. section 317(d)(5), which will assist the Center for Minority Veterans to “conduct and sponsor appropriate research on the needs of Veterans who are minorities and to the extent to which programs authorized under this title meet the needs of those Veterans, without regard to any law concerning the collection of information from the public”. Until recently representative race/ethnicity data was not available. VA has developed methodology to collect demographic data which should provide an opportunity to conduct preliminary reviews.

In town hall meetings in Chicago, Illinois; San Antonio, Texas; and Fayetteville, North Carolina; minority Veterans have expressed the opinion that they feel that the percentage levels that they receive for disability, especially PTSD claims are significantly lower than that received by non-minority Veterans. VA officials during these town hall sessions have been able to describe the process of assessing disability levels, but have not been able to present actual data that would dispel this belief of potential disparities. The publication of a VA report would prove valuable in dispelling long standing perceptions of minority Veterans regarding the disability rating process.

VA Response: Concur-in-Principle

VBA concurs-in-principle with the recommendation regarding the importance of analyzing factors that could contribute to differences in disability compensation awards. In 2009, VBA contracted with IDA to study such differences, including differences among minority Veterans. IDA’s report demonstrates the complexity of conducting such an analysis.

IDA pointed out that differences in average compensation do not necessarily imply unequal treatment of Veterans, and that answering the question of disparities or unequal treatment requires first examination of the factors that lead to a compensation award, and then determination of which of these factors are explained by characteristics of the Veterans and their applications rather than by VBA judgments and decisions. VBA believes that any demographic analysis conducted in the future should again be conducted by an expert analytical organization such as IDA.

OPP may be able to assist VBA in an empirical analysis to determine if there is any evidence to support the perception of racial disparity in disability claims. OPP is currently reviewing race and ethnicity information available to the Department in an effort to determine its suitability for use in analysis. If OPP determines that it has reasonable data on race and ethnicity, staff can link it with VBA claims and award information to examine the perception of racial disparity.

Pending: OPP has received data from VBA’s Office of Performance Analysis and Integrity regarding the top five disabilities claimed by Veterans and will need to continue testing to determine if this data is sufficient to address the concerns noted in the recommendation.

Actions to Implement:

OPP Action Plan						
Recommendation#: 5						
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status	Contact Person
4	VBA	OPP	1. Assess race/ethnicity data 2. Link with VBA data 3. Evaluate combined data 4. VBA collects and uses own data		Pending	

***VA Response:** Concur in Principal (Recommendation #1 of 2015 ACMV Report also covers Recommendation #5 of 2013 ACMV Report).

Concerning Race/Ethnicity Data:

- OPP does not collect race and ethnicity data from Veterans.
- Race and ethnicity data in OPP's possession is primarily collected by other federal entities, including the Defense Manpower Data Center and the U.S. Census Bureau.
- Race and ethnicity data collected by VA program offices is incomplete.
- Over time, the OMB definition for the race and ethnicity categories has changed.
- Some race data and ethnicity data is purchased from a commercial source, but it too is incomplete.

Concerning the Identification of Delivery Gaps and Potential Disparate Levels of Service:

- OPP does not have the data needed to identify delivery gaps and potential disparate levels of service for all benefits and utilization programs.

**2012 Action Plan Update Spreadsheet
ACMV 2012 Report Action Plan**

Report Year	Recommendations	Program Office	Page	Status as of July 2013	Project Completed Date as of July 2013	Status as of July 2014	Project Completed Date as of July 2014
2012	Recommendation #1	VHA		Nonconcur Complete	NA	Nonconcur Complete	NA
2012	Recommendation #2	VHA		Complete	NA	Complete	NA
2012	Recommendation #3	VHA		Complete	NA	Complete	NA
2012	Recommendation #4	VHA		Complete		Complete	NA
				Complete	NA	Complete	NA
2012	Recommendation #5	VHA		Complete	NA	Complete	NA
2012	Recommendation #6	VHA		Complete	NA	Complete	NA
2012	Recommendation #7	VHA		Complete	NA	Complete	NA
2012	Recommendation #8	VHA		Complete	NA	Complete	NA
		VHA		Complete	NA	Complete	NA
		NCA		In Progress	FY 2015	Complete	NA
2012	*Recommendation #9	VHA		Complete	NA	Complete	NA
		VBA		Nonconcur Complete	NA	Nonconcur Complete	NA
		NCA		In Progress	FY 2015	In Progress	FY 2015
		ODI (06)		In Progress	FY 2014	Completed	On-going
2012	Recommendation #10	VBA		Complete	NA	Complete	NA
2012	Recommendation #11	VHA		Complete	NA	Complete	NA
		VBA		Complete	NA	Complete	NA
		NCA		Complete	NA	Complete	NA

***See Narrative for additional updates as of July 2015.**

Recommendation #9: VA regional administrators should monitor staff recruitment efforts with a goal of hiring staff that are diverse and reflective of the Veteran population.

Rationale: There are approximately 10,000 Native American Veterans and 12,000 Asian American/Pacific Islander Veterans in the Texas area, therefore special emphasis should be placed on targeting recruitment efforts to increase the employment of Veterans of these ethnicities. Few individuals of these ethnic backgrounds are currently employed by the VA in the Texas area.

NCA Response: Concur

As a part of the MVPCs normal outreach duties, they provide Veterans a copy of NCA's brochure with information on how to apply for employment opportunities at NCA. In FY 2012, NCA offices nationwide have participated in several outreach events specifically targeting Native American Veterans and Asian American/Pacific Islander Veterans. As a practice, NCA utilizes these opportunities for recruitment to further diversify the workforce as well as increasing minority participation in the services and benefits that we provide. Some of the measures NCA has taken to improve Native American Veterans and Asian American/Pacific Islander Veterans' participation so far in FY 2012 include the Under Secretary, Mr. Muro, as well as other NCA executives serving as guest speakers at events focusing on outreach and recruitment of these targeted groups, including the White House Asian American Pacific Islander Roundtable, and the Tribal Governments Consultation in Washington, DC.

In addition, NCA has participated in outreach at events in Texas such as the Heroes and Heritage Program/Career Fair, February 27, 2012, Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas, and the LULAC National Women's Conference, April 13-14, 2012, Hilton Houston Oak, Houston, Texas. Through NDIP, NCA provides opportunities for students from the Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA), the Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies (APAICS), and the International Leadership Foundation (ILF) to gain Federal job experience for ten weeks. This program serves as a very useful long range recruiting tool. In FY 2012, several of the NDIP interns were obtained through Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) outreach. NCA has established partnerships with the ILF, APAICS, and OCA to sponsor students throughout the year at various cemetery locations nationwide.

The Veterans Cemetery Grants Program conducts quarterly conference calls and e-mails program updates to state cemeteries and other organizations about pending grants. Individual conference calls have been conducted with Hawaii and Guam providing guidance on their pending project; this initiative ensures funding and additional employment opportunities for Asian American/Pacific Islander communities. In FY 2012, two Tribal grants have been approved and another is pending.

NCA Action Plan – Action Plan – Recommendation #9

Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks
Develop long range recruitment programs to increase opportunities for Veterans and students with disabilities.	Office of Diversity and Alternative Dispute Resolution Programs (40A)	Human Resource	<p>Step 1 - Develop standard Memorandum of Understanding with educational institutions that have horticulture educational programs.</p> <p>Step 2 - Recruit students with disabilities from educational institutions and Veterans across the spectrum.</p> <p>Step 3 - Increase participation in the NDIP by 2 percent each year.</p> <p>Step 4 - Collaborate with the Veterans Employment Services Office (VESO) to identify partnership opportunities.</p> <p>Step 5 - Quarterly monitor Veteran hiring and separation data to determine any triggers.</p>
Execute FY 2012 Veterans Cemetery Grant Operating Plan.	Cemetery Grants Program		Establish 29 new State and Tribal Government Veterans cemeteries.
Execute FY 2012 Veterans Cemetery Grant Operating Plan.	Cemetery Grants Program		Increase the percentage of Veterans served by a burial option in a national, State, or Tribal Government Veterans cemetery to 94 percent.
Determine the effectiveness of current outreach strategies.	Office of Diversity and Alternative Dispute Resolution Programs (40A)	Human Resource, Communications Outreach Office	Conduct a 3-year analysis of current outreach measures to targeted communities to determine the level of effectiveness.

**Richard G. deMoya, Lieutenant Colonel, USA (Retired)
Hispanic**

Lieutenant Colonel Richard deMoya retired in 1995 after serving 23 years in the U.S. Army, and is a WestPoint graduate. He is currently the President of Veteran's Transition and Assistance Services, in Middleton, Wisconsin.

Colonel deMoya has over 30 years' experience serving within the Veteran community. He has extensive knowledge and background in management, communications, and leadership. Having served as an Army officer, Colonel deMoya was responsible to the health and welfare for several troops during his 23 year tenure. As a senior administrator and manager of programs and services at the Wisconsin Veterans Affairs Office for 12 years, he was responsible for overseeing the state benefits and services program, including the implementation of a variety of Veterans Affairs programs. The following are examples of these programs: disability claims processing, two VA funded state Veterans cemeteries; and homeless Veteran programs. Colonel deMoya also served as Co-chair of the Governor's Council on Homelessness and as an advisor to the VA National Center on Homelessness among Veterans.

Colonel deMoya was instrumental in bringing the Troops to Teachers Program to Wisconsin. He demonstrated a strong commitment to education while serving as the Director of the Wisconsin State Approving Agency (SAA).

Colonel deMoya holds a Master's degree in Education from Pennsylvania State University, and a master's degree in Business Administration from Pepperdine University. He is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Wisconsin.

**Petty Officer First Class Elisandro (Alex) T. Diaz, U.S. Navy (Reserve)
Hispanic**

Petty Officer First Class Elisandro Diaz has served thirteen years in the United States Navy Reserve as a Combat Photographer. He has served two tours of duty in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He is currently the founder, editor and publisher of "The Orange County (OC) Sentinel" magazine and owner of Alex Diaz Productions. The OC Sentinel disseminates information on benefits, resources and events relevant to Veterans, active duty military members, their families, civic leaders and the community at large.

Mr. Diaz has over 14 years of professional experience as a mortgage office and real estate agent. He currently serves on the board of the Orange County Home Ownership Prevention Collaborative; with an emphasis on helping Veterans preserve their homes.

In addition, Mr. Diaz currently serves as the Commander of the American GI Forum's Rudy Escalante Chapter. He has played an active role in several Veteran events in his community to include: serving as the Public Affairs Officer for the Inaugural Orange County Homeless Veterans Stand Down; organizing committee-member for the Moving Wall's visit to Garden Grove, California; and facilitated a Veterans Conference at Santa Ana College. Mr. Diaz resides in California.

Many-Bear Grinder, Colonel, USA (Retired)
Pacific Islander

Colonel Many-Bears Grinder is a U. S. Army National Guard retiree with over 35 years of service. She was an Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) veteran who served in Afghanistan. During her deployment, Colonel Grinder served as the Head of Secretariat for the International Police Coordination Board. She has also worked with Afghan Police forces and senior officials to ensure standardized training for the Afghan Police.

In January 2011, Governor Bill Haslam selected Many-Bears Grinder to be the Commissioner for the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs. She has the honor of being the first woman to serve the State in this capacity. Commissioner Grinder has been instrumental in opening a new State Veterans Cemetery in East Tennessee and Veterans have received more than 1.9 billion dollars in federal funding from claims filed by the department in 2015. Mrs. Many-Bears Grinder has created many milestones since her appointment in 2011 to include: the state's first formal casualty standard operating procedure to assist casualty officers and surviving members, co-hosting the first Women Veteran's Summit in 2012 that offered networking opportunities as well as benefit and health information.

Colonel Grinder holds a Master's degree in Strategic Studies from the Army War College and a Master's degree in Human Resource Development from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She is a member of several military and Veteran organizations including AMVETS, the American Legion and Disabled Veterans of America.

In 2004, Many-Bears Grinder was inducted into the Fort Benning Hall of Fame for her many accomplishments.

Harold Hunt, USA
Native American

Mr. Hunt served over nine years in U.S. Army as Light Infantryman. He was awarded the Purple Heart for military merit while serving in the 199th Light Infantry Brigade, Republic of South Vietnam. Mr. Hunt served as the Veteran Service Officer for Robeson County, North Carolina. In addition, he has served as a Service Officer for the National American Indians Veterans, Inc.

Mr. Hunt has served as Post and District Commander for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Past Chief of Staff Military Order of the Purple Heart State of North Carolina, and a member of the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Lumbee Warriors Association, and National Association of County Veterans Service Officers. Mr. Hunt currently is the State Service Officer for the Military Order of the Purple Heart in the State of North Carolina. He resides in North Carolina.

Patricia Jackson-Kelley, Lieutenant Colonel, USA (Retired)
African American

Lieutenant Colonel Jackson-Kelly retired from the military after completing 26 years of active duty and reserve military service. She also retired from the Greater Los Angeles VA, Los Angeles Campus. Ms. Jackson-Kelley served as one of the first full time Women Veteran Program Managers (coordinators). She was instrumental in creating many of the initiatives for women Veterans. She currently serves as a member of the LA County Veterans Advisory Council; Board Member of Military Women in Need Organization and LA County Council Commander of the American Legion.

She has been the recipient of prestigious awards at the National, State, and local levels. To name just a few: California Department of Veteran Affairs' Veteran of the Year and Achievement in Leadership, 47th Assembly District Assembly Member, Holly J. Mitchell and 62nd Assembly District Steven Bradford Veteran of the Year, Ford Freedom Unsung Military Honoree, Sylvia Renee Banton Award and 23rd District Veteran of the Year.

Ms. Jackson-Kelley holds an Associate Degree in Applied Science in Nursing, Bachelor of Science in Nursing, and a Master's in Public Administration in Health Service Management.

She is married to George Kelley, a Korean War Veteran. She has one son, four grandchildren, and her husband has 5 adult children. When she takes time out to enjoy leisure and relaxation, her interests include traveling, reading, and attending cultural events.

**Sheila Mitchell, USAF
African American**

Mrs. Mitchell served over nine years in the US Air Force as a Personal Affairs Specialist and Military Affairs Supervisor. She was responsible for several military programs including the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP), Transition Assistance Program (TAP), the Family Support Center, the Air Force Aid Society, and Special Trophies and Awards.

Following her military career, Mrs. Mitchell continued to serve the Veteran population. In a dual role as a Benefits Counselor and Executive Assistant to the Director of the Maryland Center for Veterans Education and Training (MCVET), she assisted the Executive Director with grant writing and fundraising efforts in addition to providing claims assistance to the unique population of homeless Veterans served by MCVET. Later she served as an Appeals Consultant/Veterans Claims Representative for the Virginia Department of Veterans Services – primarily at the Board of Veterans Appeals in Washington DC representing Veterans to successfully prosecute their appeals. Mrs. Mitchell currently serves as President and Chief Executive Officer for Veterans at Your Service, LLC, a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business assisting Veterans with the VA claims and appeals process with an emphasis on advocating for the homeless Veteran.

Mrs. Mitchell holds a BA in Psychology from North Carolina Central University, and an AAS in Personnel Administration. She is on the Board of Directors for the Northern Virginia Rough Riders Junior Buffalo Soldiers Drill Team – the only one in the nation and a program that is part of the Rough Riders Buffalo Soldiers Association. She is the Event Coordinator and Troop Mom for the organization membership - consisting of young boys ages 6-17. Mrs. Mitchell resides in Virginia with her husband Larry (Gulf/Iraq War Veteran) and their teenage boys Sevone and Lavelle. They also have an adult son and daughter and a granddaughter.

**Librado M. Rivas, Command Sergeant Major, USA (Retired)
Hispanic**

Command Sergeant Major Rivas retired with over 25 years of total U.S. Army service. Mr. Rivas has over 42 years of combined U.S. Army and Government service. As a Command Sergeant Major, Mr. Rivas served at the Brigade and Battalion level. As a Government civilian, Mr. Rivas served in the Pentagon, as a senior GS-15, leading Army-wide programs in Lean Six Sigma, Force Structure, Systems Analyses and Permanent Change of Station.

Mr. Rivas serves as a life-time member in the American GI Forum, American Legion, Disabled American Veterans and Veterans of Foreign Wars. In the American GI Forum, Mr. Rivas has served as National Vice-Commander, National Treasurer, National Secretary, National Liaison Officer-Washington, DC and State Commander. In these capacities, he provides leadership, direction and recommendations to the VA and VSOs to ensure Veterans are provided the entitlement and benefits we have all earned by our service to our country. As a Post Service Officer with VFW 76, San Antonio, TX, Mr. Rivas also works with Veterans to provide assistance and keep them informed of their entitlements and benefits offered by VA, federal, state and local agencies.

Mr. Rivas's last federal position was at the Pentagon serving as Director, Army Lean Six Sigma (LSS) Program. He provided leadership and direction for the Army-wide program focused on continuous process improvement. He served as the LSS Principal Advisor to general officers who are the stewards of our nation's military resources. Mr. Rivas ensured that the Lean Six Sigma Program continued to be an essential element to drive performance excellence to reducing inefficiencies and cost and enabling informed decision making.

Mr. Rivas holds a Master's of Science in Administration from Central Michigan University and a Bachelor's of Science in Business Administration from the University of Maryland.

Mr. Rivas is a native of Sinton, TX and the father of two - Lee, Jr. and Susan.

**Teresita Guevara Smith, Sergeant First Class, USA (Retired)
Pacific Islander**

Sergeant First Class Teresita "Terri" Guevara Smith was born in Guam and raised in the village of Ordot. She joined the United States Army as a Patient Administrator and eventually changed her career field to become an Intelligence Analyst in 1980. Terri's patriotic service spans over 37 years, from the U.S. Army and as a civilian with the Department of Defense. She retired from active service as a Sergeant First Class in February 1997.

As a Veteran of Foreign Wars, she has been in the Persian Gulf War (December 1990 - May 1991) and Iraq War. In the Iraq War, Terri deployed (volunteered) as a DOD Civilian (January—August 2005). Terri joined the Defense Intelligence Agency as an Intelligence Officer and earned numerous awards. Her greatest accomplishment was receiving the "The Knowlton Award," one of the highest honors in Military Intelligence presented by the Office Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) for her work in the Department of Defense Open Source Intelligence Collection Management Program. Terri also received three Intelligence Community (IC) Meritorious Unit Citations with the most recent citations for her work in the Afghanistan Pakistan Task Force, and her subsequent awards were: the Defense Intelligence Diversity Award 2002; and the Federal Asian Pacific American Council 2013 Civilian Award "Outstanding Individual Leadership" recipient. Recently, she founded the Defense Intelligence Veterans Assisting Veterans (VAV) in her agency.

Terri has held several leadership roles working with the following non-profit organizations: Former President to the oldest Guam club, the Guam Society of America, Washington D.C.; Senior Advisor on Chamorro Women Veterans and Maryland Coordinator to the National Organization of Chamorro Veterans in America, United States, Guam, and CNMI; Guam representative to the Pacific Island Council of Leaders; Prince Georges Minority Group/NAACP, Upper Marlboro Maryland; Founder and Co-Chairman of the National Organization of Pacific Islanders in America.

Terri has pursued numerous Joint Military Intelligence Training and College Course, with National Intelligence University Classes; towards completing her degree.

Rebecca S. Stone, Staff Sergeant, USA (Retired)
Native American

Staff Sergeant Rebecca Stone is a Veteran of the US Army and served in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn. Originally from Oklahoma, she now resides in Maryland.

She earned her certificate in Applied Behavior and Social Science and her B.S. in Psychology under the University System of Maryland. She also completed graduate intensive programs in Cultural Neuroscience from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

She currently serves as a Commissioner for the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives (GOCI) – Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs (MCIA) as well as the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs-Commission on Military Monuments. She holds several other community positions throughout the state of Maryland.

She represents the Native American community and is a member of the Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma.

****Marvin Trujillo, Jr., USMC**
Native American

Mr. Trujillo is a Laguna Tribal Member who belongs to the Road Runner, Little Parrot, and Turkey Clans. He serves as the Tribal Veterans Service Officer for the Pueblo of Laguna and the Co-Chair of the All Indian Pueblo Council Veterans Committee.

Mr. Trujillo entered the United States Navy in 1993, and served four years as an Aviation Electronics Technician, Aviation Warfare Specialist 2nd Class Petty Officer. He specialized in the F-14 Tomcat Avionic and Radar Weapons Systems. Mr. Trujillo served multiple tours to the Persian Gulf with Fighter Squadron Eleven (VF-11) on board the USS Independence, USS Carl Vinson, and the USS John C. Stennis. He later entered the Hampton Roads Naval ROTC Unit and went to college at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. In 2001, Mr. Trujillo graduated with his Bachelors of Science in Communication, and was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps. He later attended Flight Training at Naval Air Station Pensacola and Aviation Maintenance Officer School at Naval Air Station Whiting Field in Florida. He served with Marine Air Wing Group 13 at Marine Corps Air Station in Yuma, Arizona. Mr. Trujillo was elected and served as the 2nd Lt Governor for the Pueblo of Laguna in 2009-2010. He served as a member of the Pueblo's Energy Core Team for PNM, Continental Divide Electric Cooperative, and New Mexico Gas Company.

Mr. Trujillo also served as the Ex-Officio to the Laguna Development Corporation, the Mid-Region Council of Government–Metropolitan Transportation Board, the New Mexico State–Tribal Collaboration and Communication Work Group for a Safer New Mexico, and was a member of the All Indian Pueblo Council. Mr. Trujillo resides in New Mexico.

Cornell A. Wilson Jr., Major General, USMC (Retired)
African American

Major General Cornell Wilson, Jr. currently serves as the Military Affairs Advisor for the Governor of North Carolina. He advises the Governor, State Agencies and General Assembly on initiatives to support the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security communities and activities located in the state. He also chairs the Governor's Working Group on Veterans, Service members and their

Families to ensure their needs are met through coordination and collaboration with the Veterans Administration, State Agencies and Veterans organizations.

A graduate of the University of South Carolina, he received his commission in the United States Marine Corps through the Navy ROTC program in 1972. He has a long and distinguished record of service to our country in both active and reserve duty assignments. He has commanded Combat Arms and Combat Service Support units from the Company, Battalion, Group and Brigade levels. His staff assignments included service in manpower, operations and logistics positions. Selected as a General Officer in 1999, he served as a Deputy Commanding General for Marine Forces Central Command, Commanding General for 4th Logistics Service Support Group, Commanding General for II MACE, Deputy Commanding General II MEF, Commanding General Marine Forces Europe, Deputy Commanding General Marine Forces Command, and Commanding General Marine Forces Southern Command. In 2003, he commanded a Joint Task Force of Coalition Partners in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom based in Kuwait.

His professional military education includes the Harvard University Program for Senior Executives for National and International Security, Marshall Center Senior Executive Seminar, NATO Defense College General and Flag Officer Course, National Defense University's Capstone Course and the Logtech Executive Course.

Cornell is a founding Board member for Charlotte Bridge Home, a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting military members and their families transitioning off of active duty. He and his wife, Mary, reside in Charlotte, N.C.

**Anthony C. Woods, USA
African American**

Tony Woods, a northern California native, works for Cisco as an advisor to government clients focused on innovation and security. Prior to joining Cisco, Tony worked for President Obama's reelection campaign and served in the Obama administration as a White House Fellow assigned to the US Office of Personnel Management. Before that, Tony managed a program that developed volunteer-driven solutions for American cities as a program director at ServiceNation. The program focused on improving outcomes in third grade literacy attainment, environmental sustainability, neighborhood revitalization, and Veteran reintegration.

In 2009, Tony launched a bid to represent California's 10th district in the US House of Representatives. He's served as an aide to the Governor of New York and as an officer in the US Army. While in the Army, he deployed twice to Iraq and earned the Bronze Star for his service. Tony has written op-eds on politics and national security for The Washington Post, Daily Beast, and Huffington Post and appears regularly on The Agenda on SiriusXM.

He's earned an M.P.P. from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, a B.S. from West Point, and is currently an Executive MBA candidate at the University of Maryland's Smith School of Business. Tony serves on the Board of Directors of the Human Rights Campaign and on advisory boards for the American Red Cross and the Truman National Security Project. Tony and his husband Zack reside in the Washington DC area.

**** Chairman**