



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

October 17, 2016

The Honorable Jeff Miller
Chairman
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Enclosed is a the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) 2016 Annual Report of the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans, as required by 38 United States Code 544(c)(2). The report provides the Committee's assessment of and recommendations about VA's administration of programs, services and benefits affecting Minority Veterans, as well as VA's responses to the Committee's recommendations.

A similar letter was sent to other leaders of the Senate and House Committees on Veterans' Affairs. Should you have further questions, please have a member of your staff contact Mr. Tom Leonard, Congressional Relations Officer, at (202) 461-4893 or by email at Thomas.Leonard3@va.gov.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert A. McDonald".

Robert A. McDonald

Enclosure



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

October 17, 2016

The Honorable Johnny Isakson
Chairman
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Enclosed is a the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) 2016 Annual Report of the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans, as required by 38 United States Code 544(c)(2). The report provides the Committee's assessment of and recommendations about VA's administration of programs, services and benefits affecting Minority Veterans, as well as VA's responses to the Committee's recommendations.

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Robert A. McDonald

Enclosure



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

October 17, 2016

The Honorable Mark Takano
Acting Ranking Member
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Takano:

Enclosed is a the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) 2016 Annual Report of the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans, as required by 38 United States Code 544(c)(2). The report provides the Committee's assessment of and recommendations about VA's administration of programs, services and benefits affecting Minority Veterans, as well as VA's responses to the Committee's recommendations.

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Robert A. McDonald

Enclosure



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

October 17, 2016

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
Ranking Member
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Blumenthal:

Enclosed is a the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) 2016 Annual Report of the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans, as required by 38 United States Code 544(c)(2). The report provides the Committee's assessment of and recommendations about VA's administration of programs, services and benefits affecting Minority Veterans, as well as VA's responses to the Committee's recommendations.

A similar letter was sent to other leaders of the Senate and House Committees on Veterans' Affairs. Should you have further questions, please have a member of your staff contact Mr. Tom Leonard, Congressional Relations Officer, at (202) 461-4893 or by email at Thomas.Leonard3@va.gov.

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Robert A. McDonald

Enclosure



**THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON**

October 17, 2016

Mr. Marvin Trujillo, Jr.
Chairman
Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans
Post Office Box 444
Casa Blanca, NM 87007

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your recent letter included as part of the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans 2016 Annual Report. I was pleased to review the report, as well as the Department of Veterans Affairs' responses to the Committee's current recommendations, and the follow up we provided on previous Committee recommendations.

I sincerely value your leadership and the efforts of the Committee. The Committee has made valuable contributions to improve the way we provide services to all Veterans and family members for over twenty years. Your current efforts support the MyVA Breakthrough Priority 1 – Improve the Veterans Experience. We will ensure that the important and valuable relationship with the Committee continues.

Should you have any questions or if additional information is needed, please contact Ms. Barbara Ward, your Committee Designated Federal Official, at (202) 461-6191, or by email at Barbara.Ward@va.gov.

Your continued support of our mission is appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert A. McDonald".

Robert A. McDonald

REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MINORITY VETERANS



Annual Report

2016

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Subjects

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Letter from the Advisory Committee Chair

Dear Secretary McDonald:

I am deeply grateful to serve as the Chairman of the Advisory Committee for Minority Veterans (ACMV). The enclosed 2016 Annual Report includes recommendations which reflect key issues identified by the Committee. The members developed this report based on their individual knowledge and experiences; briefings received at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Central Office; a site visit to the Jacksonville, Florida area VA facilities; and feedback from a Town Hall Meeting conducted at the University of Florida Learning Resource Center Auditorium.

Current and past ACMV recommendations compliment the MyVA initiatives, and specifically focus on the breakthrough priorities of improving the experiences of Veterans and employees. These internal and external facing efforts promote efficient operations, and ensure Veterans are provided the same level of services, regardless of age, gender, period of service, sexual preference, place of residence, or a combination of these categories. The Committee recognizes and appreciates that individual needs are not always met by a one-size fits all customer focused model.

The Committee's past reports have highlighted the ongoing concern that the Department does not collect race and ethnicity data, and this remains a significant issue given the changing demographics and increasing diversity of the Veterans' population. The recent Commission on Care report and one of our 2016 recommendations provide sound rationales for gathering and analyzing comprehensive demographic data. Accurate data is required to support the Committee's mandated responsibility and assessment of the needs of minority Veterans with respect to compensation, health care, rehabilitation, outreach, and other benefits and programs administered by the Department. The consistent tracking of such data will also ensure the Department's success in "Improving the Veterans Experience", for all Veterans. The Committee applauds VA's efforts to match demographic data from other Federal agencies. However, we encourage the Department to develop a formal race/ethnicity data collection process that includes Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA) and National Cemetery Administration (NCA) programs and services.

The Committee is disappointed that VHA has decreased its commitment to health equity at a time when more minority Veterans are seeking medical treatment at its facilities. This is clearly evident based upon the fact that the VHA Office of Health Equity staffing level has been reduced from 8 employees to 2 employees. The Commission on Care in its final report also addressed this issue in recommendation #5. We encourage the Department to restore the Office of Health Equity to its original staffing level, and ensure that the Department's Health Equity Action Plan is fully executed.

The Committee is encouraged by the Department's ongoing progress in enhancing access to VA benefits and services for all Veterans. We remain committed to assisting the Department in its efforts to expand services to Veterans residing in rural and insular locations.

Sincerely,

Marvin A. Trujillo Jr.
Chair, Advisory Committee on
Minority Veterans

Part I. Executive Summary

The 2016 Annual 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 2016 ACMV Annual Report recommendations, and a summary of the progress made on action plans from the 2013, 2014 and 2015 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 6, 2016. The ACMV met on December 1-3, 2015 at VA Central Office (VACO) and conducted a site visit in the Jacksonville, Florida area from April 12-14, 2016. 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 at the VACO meeting. During the Jacksonville site visit, the ACMV received briefings and facility tours at the Lake City Florida VA Medical Center (VAMC), Jacksonville National Cemetery, and Jacksonville Outpatient Clinic. The Assistant Director of the St. Petersburg VA Regional Office accompanied the ACMV during the entire site visit and provided a briefing on that facility. On the afternoon of April 13, 2016, the ACMV and representatives from the Lake City VAMC, Jacksonville National Cemetery, and St. Petersburg Regional Benefits Office responded to questions from minority Veterans and provided updates on current VA initiatives during a town hall meeting conducted at the University of Florida Learning Resource Center Auditorium in Jacksonville.

The ACMV reviewed information received during meetings with VA officials, through document reviews, and from direct communications with minority Veterans. The Committee strongly believes that if implemented, the three 2016 recommendations will significantly enhance VA's ability to strategically address the needs of minority Veterans as the Veterans population become more diverse. These recommendations and rationales address the following issues:

- Contracting the publication of a report in depicting utilization and benefits, and adjudication of disability compensation claims by race, ethnicity, and gender by the end of fiscal year (FY) 2017.
- Restoring VHA's Office of Health Equity (OHE) to its original Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staffing level of eight individuals
- Implementing a "targeted outreach" program for the surviving spouses and dependent children who are eligible for burial benefits

Part II. Summary of 2016 Recommendations

Recommendation #1: That the Department of Veterans Affairs executes a contract to publish a report which reflects current utilization of VA benefits and services, and disability compensation awards by race, ethnicity, and gender by the end of Fiscal Year 2017.

Recommendation #2: That the VHA Office of Health Equity (OHE) be restored to its original eight Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staffing level by the end of Calendar Year 2016.

Recommendation #3: That the National Cemetery Administration implement a targeted burial benefits outreach program to eligible spouses, and dependent children of Veterans to increase their awareness of their eligibility for burial benefits by the end of Fiscal Year 2017.

Part III. ACMV 2016 Recommendations, Rationales and VA Responses

Recommendation #1: That the Department of Veterans Affairs executes a contract to publish a report which reflects current utilization of VA benefits and services, and disability compensation awards by race, ethnicity, and gender by the end of Fiscal Year 2017.

Rationale: Minority Veterans have historically expressed concern that their disability compensation claims may not be adjudicated fairly because of their race. The Department does not gather demographic data as part of the claims adjudication process and to date has not been able to address possible disparities in disability compensation awards based on race or ethnicity. Section 104(b)(3) of the Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 2008 directed the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to report to the Congressional Veterans Committees on progress in addressing the causes of variances in benefits to minority Veterans. In 2009, the Department contracted with the Institute for Defense Analysis (IDA) to produce a report titled "Analysis of Differences in Current Patterns of Claims submitted for Disability Compensation at the Veterans Benefits Administration," IDA Paper p-4477, September 2009. Currently, VA does not collect race and ethnicity data for disability compensation applicants. The IDA group was able to collect Department of Defense (DoD) data on the race of Veterans and match this data to VA disability compensation recipients. Many of the race fields, however, were not populated for Veterans who separated from the service before 1990. Based on IDA findings, minority Veterans claims appeared to be more complex and included multiple disabling categories, and more minority Veterans also applied for and received Individual Un-employability (IU).

In the ACMV 2013 Report response to recommendation #5, VBA stated: VBA believes that any demographic analysis conducted in the future should again be conducted by an expert analytical organization such as the Institute of Defense Analysis (IDA)(page 17). In 2015 ACMV Report, the VA Office of Policy and Planning (OPP) stated: OPP does not have the data needed to identify delivery gaps and potential disparate levels of service for all benefits and utilization programs (page 9).

Title 38 United States Code Sections 317 and 544, specify the required activities of ACMV and the Center for Minority Veterans (CMV). One of these activities is conducting demographic research on the needs of Veterans who are minorities and the extent to which programs meet the needs of those Veterans without regard to any law concerning the collection of information from the public. Another required activity is conducting an assessment of the needs of Veterans who are minority group members with respect to compensation, health care, rehabilitation, outreach, and other benefits and programs administered by the Department.

VA's National Center for Veterans Analysis & Statistics (NCVAS) 2014 Minority Veterans Report, dated April 2016, indicates that the Veteran population is becoming more diverse and further projects that minority Veterans will increase from 21 percent in 2014, to 34 percent in 2040 (page 20). This recommendation aligns with the MyVA Breakthrough Priority #1: To Improve the Veterans Experience.

Report of the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans, Annual Report 2015
<http://www.va.gov/centerforminorityVeterans/docs/cmldata/acmv2015.pdf>

Report of the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans, Annual Report 2013
<http://www.va.gov/centerforminorityVeterans/docs/cmldata/acmv2013.pdf>

2014 NCVAS Minority Veterans Report, April 2016

http://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/Minority_Veterans_2014.pdf

VA Response: Concur-In-Principle. VBA concurs-in-principle and agrees that continuous improvement in services and benefits must be data-driven and evidence-based. Currently, the Annual Benefits Reports contains gender-specific data but not data specific to race/ethnicity. The Committee's rationale correctly states that VA does not collect race and ethnicity data for disability compensation applicants or as part of the claims adjudication process. In response to the ACMV 2015 Annual Report, OPP conducted a review of available data within the Department and various external resources to determine its suitability for analysis. As a result of that review, OPP is currently drafting a report on Military History and VA Benefits Utilization Statistics that will include data on current utilization of VA benefits and services and disability compensation awards by race, ethnicity and gender. Therefore, VBA does not concur with the recommendation to contract a report to provide this analysis. VBA believes the OPP report, scheduled for release by the end of FY 2017, will address the concerns of the committee.

Recommendation #2: That the VHA Office of Health Equity (OHE) be restored to its original eight Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staffing level by the end of Calendar Year 2016.

Rationale: During the December 2015, ACMV meeting updates on VHA health equity accomplishments and initiatives, the ACMV discovered that the staffing of the VHA Office of Health Equity had been recently reduced from 8 FTEs to 2 FTEs. The Committee was assured by the Deputy Under Secretary for Health – Organizational Excellence, that the Office of Health Equity would receive her full support and would be provided adequate resources to fulfill its mission. However, as June 2016, the OHE staffing level remained at 2 FTEs.

The Commission on Care June 2016, draft report recommendations concluded that VHA leadership should make health care equity a priority by providing OHE budgetary support in FY 2017 and beyond to fully staff the office so that it can successfully achieve its mission and goals, to include providing additional needed funding to support implementation of the Health Equity Action Plan. Additionally, VHA leadership should ensure OHE reports to senior VHA leadership. Two of the enabling requirements to support this conclusion included: Restore OHE's budget to provide the level of (8 FTE) staffing under which the office operated in March 2013 and; Reinstate OHE within the office of the USH, to underscore health equity as a priority and to position the office to champion successfully the advancement of health equity for all Veterans (page 32).

The VA NCVAS 2014 Minority Veterans Report, dated April 2016, indicated that the Veteran population will decrease from 22.3 million in 2014, to 14.5 million in 2040; and over this time, the percent of minority Veterans will increase from 21 percent to 34 percent (page 20). In FY 2013, 39 percent of non-prior service active component enlisted female accessions were minorities and 17 percent were Hispanic (page 5).

References: VA's Office of Health Equity Mission and Accomplishments – November 2015, Report <http://www.va.gov/HEALTH/EQUITY/>

Commission on Care Draft Recommendations, page 32, June 2016

https://commissiononcare.sites.usa.gov/files/2016/05/050616_Draft-Recommendations-for-Review.pdf

2014, NCVAS Minority Veterans Report, pages 5 & 20, dated April 2016
http://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/Minority_Veterans_2014.pdf

VA Response: Concur in Principle

VHA OHE has been approved for an additional four FTEs and will work with Human Resources in the development of position descriptions and recruiting efforts. In November 2015, as part of the VHA reorganization, the Office of Organizational Excellence (OOE) was established. As part of its development, four new sub-offices were created and the OHE was moved under its management umbrella. No new FTE or fiscal resources were provided in support of the reorganization and the establishment of these sub-program offices. OOE will review the OHE staffing plan again in January 2017, to see if an additional 2 FTEs are available to complete the proposed staffing model. An additional two vacancies are not available at this time.

VHA Action Plan – Recommendation #2:						
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status as of July 2016	Contact Person
Resource approval for an additional 4 FTEs. Human Resources to work with the OHE in the development of position descriptions and recruiting efforts with additional administrative support from the OOE.	Office of Organizational Excellence	Office of Health Equity Workforce Management and Consulting Office – VSHO (Human Resources)	Obtain resource approval for 4 additional FTEs. Begin process to recruit (develop position descriptions, et. al.) Office of Organizational Excellence to review available resources again in January 2017 to see if an additional two FTE are available to complete the proposed staffing model. An additional two vacancies are not available at this time.	At the direction of the Office of Health Equity.	Approval granted in July 2016.	

Recommendation #3: That the National Cemetery Administration implement a targeted burial benefits outreach program to eligible spouses, and dependent children of Veterans to increase their awareness of their eligibility for burial benefits by the end of Fiscal Year 2017.

Rationale: It is apparent that many Veterans and their spouses are unaware of the eligibility for burial benefits for spouses and certain dependent children. The Center for Minority Veterans receives numerous inquiries on an ongoing basis and this topic is frequently raised during Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans town hall meetings, outreach workshops, and other events. The 2010 National Survey of Veterans: Understanding and Knowledge of VA Benefits and Services- indicated that of those Veterans without burial plans, 29.1 percent did not know the eligibility criteria (page 180). In that same 2010, report, only 26 percent of surviving spouses reported that they were very aware or aware of burial and memorial benefits (page 293). This recommended targeted outreach effort to spouses and dependent children would augment the recent update in burial eligibility information on the NCA website.

Burial Benefits Eligibility Spouses and Dependents
http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/burial_benefits/eligible.asp

2010 National Survey of Veterans, Veterans, Active Duty Service Members, Demobilized National Guard and Reserve Members, Family Members and Spouses, pages 180 & 293)
<http://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SurveysAndStudies/NVSSurveyFinalWeightedReport.pdf>

VA Response: Concur

NCA Action Plan – Recommendation #3						
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status as of July 2016	Contact Person
Continue past efforts to widely broadcast spousal eligibility for the new Pre-Need Burial Eligibility Program	Communications and Outreach Support (43A2)	N/A	Communication plan and products	Qtr. 1 FY 2017	Ready to launch with program	
NCA will continue to work closely with the Center for Minority Veterans to increase outreach efforts in collaboration with VHA and VBA.	ADR & Diversity (40A2)	CMV (008)	To increase outreach efforts	Ongoing	During FY 2015, CMV developed a spreadsheet that identified outreach activities within each District which is distributed to each of the MVPCs in order for VHA, VBA, and NCA to collaborate and increase outreach activities.	
NCA's Equal Employment Opportunity Office will back fill for the full-time Minority Veterans Program Coordinator's position by the end of the first quarter of FY 2017.	ADR & Diversity (40A2)		Recruit for the full-time MVPC position.	December 2017		

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

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

December 1 - 3, 2015
VA Central Office
810 Vermont Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20420

AGENDA

Tuesday – December 1, 2015 (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. - 9:45 a.m.	Center for Minority Veterans	Ms. Barbara Ward, Director
9:45 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	Break	
10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	VA Remarks/Photo Op	The Honorable Robert A. McDonald Secretary
11:00 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.	Mental Health Services	Dr. Harold Kudler Chief Consultant Mental Health Services

Topics:

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

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, Acting Director, National Center for Veteran Analysis & Statistics

Topics:

- Update on Data collection efforts.
- Update on Recommendation #1, 2015 ACMV Report, of a report on selected VA benefits and services utilization by minority Veterans.

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

- Provide an update on OTGR's current initiatives.

2:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

MyVA Initiative

Mr. Mike Feil, Director
Program Support Office
MyVA Task Force

Topics:

- Provide an overview of the MyVA Initiative.

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

BREAK

2:45 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.

Veterans Benefits Administration

Ms. Anna Crenshaw, Assistant
Director, Policy, Procedures &
Outreach - Benefits
Assistance Service

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 &
Sub-Committee Notes

Mr. Marvin Trujillo, Chair

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)**

December 1 – 3, 2015
VA Central Office
810 Vermont Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20420

AGENDA

Wednesday – December 2, 2015 (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. – 10:00 a.m.	National Cemetery Administration	Mr. Glenn Powers Deputy Under Secretary for Field Programs
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Topics:

- Update on Recommendation #3, 2015 ACMV Report, reference state cemeteries in the US Virgin Islands.
- Update on Recommendation #4, 2015 ACMV Report, reference clarifying “open” and “closed” cemeteries.
- 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.

10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	Office of Health Equity	Dr. Uchenna Uchendu Executive Director
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Topics:

- Update on current OHE initiatives.

11:00 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.	Break	
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11:15 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Veterans Health Administration	Dr. Carolyn Clancy Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health
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Topics

- Update on VHA's "Accelerating Access to Care Initiative" and on the Choice Program.
- Update on "targeted outreach initiatives" to minority Veterans.
- VHA Transformation.

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

Lunch on Your Own

1:00 p.m. - 1:45 p.m.

Veterans Economic Community Initiative

Ms. Christi Collins
Assistant Director
Curriculum & Training

Topics

- Overview of the Veterans Economic Community Initiative.

1:45 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.

Office of Rural Health

Mr. Adam Bluth
Program Analyst, ORH

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 Insular areas.
- Outreach efforts in rural and insular areas.

2:15 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Women's Health Services
(providing briefing slides only)

Dr. Patricia Hayes
Chief Consultant
Women's Health Services

Topics:

- Overview on minority women's health.

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

Break

3:15 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Homeless Veterans

Mr. Anthony Love
Director
Community Engagement

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)
 December 1 – 3, 2015
 VA Central Office
 810 Vermont Ave., NW, Washington, D.C.**

AGENDA

Thursday – December 3, 2015 (VACO Room 230)

8:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.	Opening and Agenda	Mr. Marvin Trujillo, Chairman
8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.	Office of Diversity & Inclusion	Ms. Georgia Coffey, Deputy Assistant Secretary for 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.

9:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	Ex-Officios Update	HHS – Dr. Nadine Gracia Office of Minority Health DOD – Mr. Bret Stevens Disability Evaluation Systems
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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 – Jacksonville Site Visit

**Department of Veterans Affairs
Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans
Jacksonville, Florida Site Visit 2016**

AGENDA

Monday, April 11, 2016

Travel Day

Tuesday, April 12, 2016

7:00 a.m.

Assemble in Hotel Lobby/Board Bus
Springhill Suites Marriott Jacksonville Airport
13550 Airport Court, Jacksonville, Florida

7:15 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.

Travel to Lake City VA Medical Center
619 S. Marion Avenue, Lake City, FL 32025-5808

8:30 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.

Meet/Greet Lake City VAMC Staff
Assemble in Meeting Room A123
(Directors' Conference Room)

Lake City VAMC Lobby

8:45 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.

Opening remarks, Admin. & Prepare for
Lake City VAMC Briefing

Barbara Ward, DFO
Marvin Trujillo, Jr., Chairman

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

Lake City VAMC Briefing

Thomas Wisnieski, Director
Blondell Bradley, MVPC

Topics:

Outreach to Minority Veterans (MVPC)
Women & Homeless Veterans
Leadership Training Programs
Choice Program

11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

VAMC Tour (**Tour closed to the Public**) Tenna Liston, Chief Nurse Operations

12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Lunch in Lake City VAMC Canteen (on your own)

1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

St. Petersburg Regional Benefit Office Briefing
Room A123 (Directors' Conference Room)
619 S. Marion Avenue, Lake City, FL 32025

Tracey Betts
Assistant Director

Topics:

Outreach to Minority Veterans (MVPC)
Women & Homeless/Incarcerated Veterans
Leadership Training Programs
Intake Sites
Catchment Area Discussion
Claims Processing
Home Loan Program & Transformation Initiatives

3:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Break/Board Bus

4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Bus departs for Hotel
Springhill Suites Marriott Jacksonville Airport

Wednesday, April 13, 2016

7:30 a.m. Assemble in Hotel Lobby/Board Bus
Springhill Suites Marriott Jacksonville Airport
13550 Airport Court, Jacksonville, Florida

8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. Travel to Jacksonville National Cemetery
4083 Lannie Road, Jacksonville, FL 32218

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

9:15 a.m. - 11:15 a.m. Jacksonville Nat'l Cemetery Briefing/Tour Alphaeus L. Richburg, Director
Maxine Griffin, MVPC

11:15 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Assemble/Board Bus to River City Market Place
13000 City Station Drive, Jacksonville, FL 32218

11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Lunch (River City Market Place)

1:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. Assemble/Board Bus for VA Jacksonville Outpatient Clinic
1536 N. Jefferson St., Jacksonville, FL 32209

1:30 p.m. - 1:45 p.m. Meet/Greet OPC Staff VA Jacksonville OPC Lobby
Assemble in Meeting Room 2L 103-106
(Large conference room)

1:45 p.m. – 2:45 p.m. VA Jacksonville Outpatient Clinic (OPC) Melinda D. Screws
1536 N. Jefferson St., Jacksonville, FL 32209 Chief Medical Officer

2:45 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. Tour Jacksonville Out Patient Clinic (OPC) Melinda D. Screws, CMO
(Tour closed to the Public) Ashley Ross, AO

3:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Assemble/Board Bus to University of Florida LRC Auditorium

3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. Prep for Town Hall Meeting

4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. Town Hall Meeting Barbara Ward, DFO
University of Florida LRC Auditorium Marvin Trujillo, Jr., Chairman
Learning Resource Center, 1st Floor
653-1 West 8th Street (enter garage on Jefferson St)
Jacksonville, FL 32209

6:30 p.m. – 6:45 p.m. Assemble/Board Bus for Hotel
Springhill Suites Marriott Jacksonville Airport

Thursday, April 14, 2016

7:00 a.m.	Assemble in Hotel Lobby/Board Bus Springhill Suites Marriott Jacksonville Airport 13550 Airport Court, Jacksonville, Florida	
7:15 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.	Travel to Jacksonville VA OPC 1536 N. Jefferson St., Jacksonville, FL	
8:30 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.	Meet/Greet Jacksonville VA OPC Staff Assemble in Meeting Room: 2L 103-106	Jacksonville OPC Lobby
8:45 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	Committee after Action Review & Sub-committee Notes Prepare for Exit Briefing	Barbara Ward, DFO Marvin Trujillo, Jr., Chairman
10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	Public Comments	
10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Conduct Exit Briefing VBA Leadership – Ms. Tracey Betts, Assistant Director VHA Leadership – Mr. Thomas Wisnieski, Director NCA Leadership – Mr. Alphaeus L. Richburg, Director	
12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch (Place TBD)	
1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Work on ACMV 2016 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 Springhill Suites Marriott Jacksonville Airport	

Friday, April 15, 2016

Travel Day

Part VI. Town Hall Meeting – Jacksonville, Florida

The ACMV hosted a Veterans Town Hall Meeting at the University of Florida's LRC Auditorium. The meeting provided Veterans a forum to share with committee members issues of concern and to obtain answers to questions related to VA benefits and services. Approximately 60 Veterans and some family members were in attendance. Local VA officials from the Lake City VA Medical Center, St. Petersburg Regional Benefit Office and the VA Jacksonville National Cemetery served as panel members during the meeting. Numerous questions were raised regarding access to medical care, required documentation when filing a disability claim, billing processes for payment to private providers, burial benefits and certification process for establishing a Veteran Owned Small Business. Based upon several questions received from Veterans clarifying burial benefits, the Committee concluded that many Veterans were not aware of the eligibility criteria for spouses and dependent children. VA officials to provide appropriate follow up on several issues.

Part VII. Exit Briefing with St. Petersburg Regional Office, Lake City VA Medical Center, and Jacksonville National Cemetery

Tracey Betts, Assistant Director, St. Petersburg Regional Office:

- Consistency in disability ratings is important.
- Do not collect the demographics at the start of the process of the claim.
- Every medical condition is treated independently during the adjudication process.
- Have mandatory national training throughout the year for raters – to include Certification Training.
 - Examiners have to retest every 3 years.
 - A contracted firm conducts the testing.
 - The test is either a Pass or Fail – failures have to retest.
 - VBA has quality indicators and reviewers in place
 - Systemic issues on a national level are reviewed.
- After 2 years – claims examiners are considered fully-trained.
- When new programs are established, they start with a pilot, and a communication plan is in place.
- VBA staff is provided VA 101 – The Veteran Experience training to assist them in understanding the Veteran experience.
- It was noted that the VA Regional Office Veteran population slides did not depict the Hispanic Veteran population. Approximately 1.5 million Veterans reside in Florida, with 128,199 Hispanics or Latinos being part of that population.

Thomas Wisnieski, Director, Lake City VA Medical Center:

- Outstanding tour of the VAMC – kudos to the staff of the Jacksonville OPC.
- ACMV encourage the VAMC staff to become familiar with the role of the VHA Office of Health Equity and utilize it as a potential source to help their Veterans.
- Kudos was given to the VHA MVPC for doing a great job outreaching to the Veterans in rural areas.
- Local officials established Telehealth Connections while experiencing challenges with hiring Mental Health Providers.
- Online Enrollment Applications are utilized, and new patients are contacted for an appointment – usually under 30 days, and in some situations may be offered the Choice Card program.
- Diversity of the local workforce could be improved and is a priority.
- Local VA staff works with Florida State Agencies to obtain additional resources to assist Veterans. They have great relations with their local community partners.
- ACMV members thanked the Director and his entire team for their efforts supporting the Committee and local Veterans.

Alphaeus Richburg, Director, Jacksonville National Cemetery:

- Committee was appreciative of the Director including all of the NCA staff to provide input during the briefing.
- A strong cohesive team was evident and included a good relationship in working with the community.
- Recommended that the Director verify the correctness of the order of precedence of the service flags displayed.

- The Director was complimented for being upfront with the issues on hand, and the passion to correct these issues.
- There is no available bereavement training provided for cemetery staff to decompress with their jobs. However, staff indicated they had identified their own sources for dealing with this issue.
- In the Director's closing comments, noted that he had found his niche in life, which is a passion for taking care of Veterans.

APPENDIX A: Action Plans Follow Up

Roll Up of Open ACMV Reports Action Plans 2013-2015 Update Spreadsheets

2015 Action Plan Update Spreadsheet
ACMV 2015 Report Action Plan

2015 Action Plan Update Spreadsheet

Report Year	Recommendations	Program Office	Page	Current Status as of 1 July 2016	Projected Completed Date (Date/NA)
2015	Recommendation #1	OPP		Pending	*closed/ongoing
2015	*Recommendation #2	ODI		In Progress	closed/ongoing
2015	Recommendation #3	VBA		In Progress	*closed/ongoing
2015	*Recommendation #3	VHA	Summer 2015	In Progress	*closed/ongoing
2015	Recommendation #3	NCA		In Progress	closed/*ongoing

***See Updated Action Plans**

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.

VA Response: OPP 2016 Update

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		Complete the report and submit it to the CMV for their review.	9/30/2015 (sent to CMV on 7/22/2016)	Completed/ In Concurrence	

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.

VA Response: ODI 2016 Update.

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

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/
	ODI	CSEMO	ODI will define capability requirements to integrate SES applicant data into existing system	5/31/2015	Completed	David Williams/ (ODI)
	ODI	CSEMO	ODI will integrate capability requirements into the refined applicant flow system.	12/31/2015	Completed	David Williams/ (ODI)
	ODI	CSEMO	ODI will deploy the newly integrated system.	9/30/2017	Delayed due to resource constraints, lack of data availability, and loss of subject matter expert. OPM is currently modifying the US Staffing system applicant flow data to track SES applicants. Expected full completion is 6/30/2017	David Williams (ODI)
	ODI	CSEMO	ODI will deploy the newly integrated system.	9/30/2017	Delayed due to resource constraints, lack of data availability, and loss of subject matter expert. OPM is currently modifying the US Staffing system applicant flow data to track SES applicants. Expected full completion is 6/30/2017	David Williams (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 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)	12/30/2016	Delayed due to availability of trained resources, lack of data availability, and loss of subject matter expert.	David Williams/ (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.

Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status	Contact Person
	ODI		As part of the MOU with AAFEA and AAGEN, ODI supported the AAGEN Leadership Workshop through the following ways: announcement through media such as All Station memorandum, new sletters, etc.; VA advertisement in the program booklet; and exhibit show case.	9/30/2016	- AAGEN (Completed 6/16/2016)	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		Per availability of resources, VA will continue to support the AAFEA 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 (To be completed by 9/14/2016)	Karen Basnight (ODI)
	ODI		Per availability of resources, VA will continue to support employee participation in the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) Convention 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 (Completed 7/15/2016)	Karen Basnight (ODI)

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.

VA Response: VBA 2016 Update. Recommend that this action item be closed based on the proactive outreach that VBA continues to provide to Veterans residing in rural and remote areas. In FY 2015, VBA established the Rural Outreach Coordinator (ROC) positions within all of its regional offices. The ROC provides and/or coordinates outreach support for events hosted in rural communities. VBA partners with the Office of Rural Health to continuously seek innovative and creative ways to provide outreach to rural Veterans, such as conducting webinars, and virtual and twitter town halls. The coordinators are primarily responsible for connecting, educating, and improving access to VBA benefits for Veterans, Survivors, and eligible beneficiaries who reside in rural and remote areas. Currently, the ROCs and in some cases MVPCs, partner with external stakeholders, along with the National Cemetery Administration (NCA), and VHA's mobile Vet Centers, to promote VA benefits and services in rural communities.

The Honolulu Regional Office (RO) serves the Veterans, Survivors, and eligible beneficiaries of Hawaii and the Western Pacific US Territories. The RO has out-based offices in Hilo, HI, Kahului, HI, and Hagatna, Guam. The catchment area covers many small island populations dispersed throughout an enormous geographic area of approximately 4.6 million square miles of the Pacific Ocean, and includes the State of Hawaii, US Territories of Guam and American Samoa, as well as the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands (Saipan, Tinian, and Rota).

VBA continues to use outreach coordinators from the RO to provide information about VA benefits and services to Veterans and Service members who reside in Hawaii. The RO schedules visits to the islands of Kauai, Maui, Molokai, and Lanai regularly. Accordingly, the RO benefit counselors travel to Kauai every two months, Maui monthly, and Lani and Molokai quarterly. Outreach dates to these locations are also posted on the ROs website and announced in the communities via flyers and media spots. In addition, RO employees representing each business line (Compensation, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E), and Loan Guaranty) travel to American Samoa to conduct VA benefits workshops and provide benefits counseling to Veterans, Survivors, and family members residing on the island. Due to the high expense of traveling, lack of funding, and the logistical difficulty in scheduling travel, the RO has conducted limited travel to the Federated States of Micronesia (Island of Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae) and the Commonwealth of the Marianas Islands (Saipan, Rota, and Tinian).

Similarly, the San Juan RO provides the delivery of VA benefits and services to the island of Puerto Rico and St. Thomas and St. Croix, Virgin Islands. Outreach coordinators from the RO travel to the islands monthly to provide benefits assistance and claims clinics.

Finally, RO benefit counselors provide pamphlets, factsheets, and other resources to Veterans residing in rural and remote areas to educate, inform, and empower them.

VBA Action Plan – Recommendation #3: 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.

Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status	Contact Person
Designate a ROC at each regional office, who is responsible for conducting effective and efficient outreach activities. 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.	VBA	Benefits Assistance Service, Office of Field Operations, & VBA District Offices	Designate ROCs at each VA regional office	FY 2016; 2 nd Quarter	Completed	
	VBA	Benefits Assistance Service, Office of Field Operations, & VBA District Offices	Step 1 - Create information packets/guides specifically for the targeted areas	FY 2016; 3 rd Quarter	Completed	
				Step 2 - Conduct outreach via telephone and email correspondence		Completed
			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			

VA Response: VHA 2016 Update. The VA Pacific Islands Health Care System has been privileged to provide medical care services to Guam’s Veterans since the early 1980s, to American Samoa since 2007 and to Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) since 2010. Guam Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) has 40 staff members, including 9 providers. American Samoa CBOC has 23 staff members, including 3 providers. CNMI Outreach Clinic has 1.2 staff, including a provider who cares for CNMI Veterans one day a week. The Guam CBOC provides primary care, mental health, and women’s health care. Visiting VA providers, telehealth, and home based primary care services allow for specialty care such as Endocrinology, Gastroenterology, Podiatry, and Polytrauma/Traumatic Brain Injury services. VA also has agreements with the Naval Hospital for emergency care, acute inpatient care, and some specialty services. Veterans requiring off island referrals are assisted by VA Beneficiary Travel, if eligible, to help defray costs. American Samoa (AMS) CBOC and CNMI Outreach Clinic offer basically the same services, as do the Guam CBOC, but with more emphasis on video television (VTEL), and less home based primary care. FY 2015 VA travel support provided for these Veterans is depicted below:

**FY 2015 GUAM/CNMI AND AMERICAN SAMOA COST & NUMBER OF VETERANS
BENEFICIARY TRAVEL**

	AMS \$	AMS #	Guam/CNMI \$	Guam/CNMI #
Commercial Travel	2,116,445.00	1071	829,766.00	261
Medivac	950,888.00	3	1,436,157.00	17

In addition to VA staff, the Guam CBOC shares a pharmacist with the Naval Hospital, for education and consultation both with Veterans and staff, along with a Diabetes Nurse Educator and a Nurse Care Coordinator.

VA staff support our Guam Homeless Veteran Program with outreach, case management, and referral services. The Housing and Urban Development - VA Supportive Housing program provides vouchers to assist eligible Guam Veterans. Efforts are also underway to establish a five-bed emergency housing program as part of the VA Pacific Islands HCS Homeless Veterans Transition Program and a Veterans' Treatment Court on Guam.

VA officials have established relationships with multiple University of Guam Department Heads. This 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 Guam CBOC, as well as 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.

We have come a long way from our Insular VA clinic inception and all of the VA staff are honored to serve these Veteran communities.

GUAM/CNMI (FY 2015 Data)

- Enrolled Veterans: 4,200
- Individual Veterans Treated at CBOC: 2,905
- Outpatient Visits: 17,998
- OIF/Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)/OND Veterans: 842
- Women Veterans: 234

AMERICAN SAMOA (FY 2015 Data)

- Enrolled Veterans: 1,200
- Individual Veterans Treated at CBOC: 969
- Outpatient Visits: 8,957
- OIF/OEF/OND Veterans: 273
- Women Veterans: 112

Per the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act (VACAA) of 2014 and subsequent amendments, Veterans are eligible to participate in the Veterans Choice Program if they are enrolled for healthcare with VHA 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, among other eligibility criteria. This criterion applies to Veterans residing in Guam, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. VHA is continually working to address confusion about eligibility for use of VACAA in these locations.

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. Thus Puerto Rico Veterans who reside within 40 miles of the local VA medical facility and do not have to take a boat, plane or ferry to reach the facility are only eligible to use VACAA if VA is unable to provide an appointment within the wait-time goals of VHA or within a period that is less than this if such care or services are deemed clinically necessary, unless they face an unusual or excessive burden in traveling to that facility. Recent amendments to VACAA and its implementing regulations provide VA greater flexibility to determine eligibility based on burden in travel.

VHA Action Plan – Recommendation #3: 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.							
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status	Contact Person	
Mail Choice Cards to eligible Veterans Tri-West Call Center to be established in Hawaii to handle all Pacific Choice calls April 2015 Tri West Call Center to be fully operational w/ 63 personnel operating from 7 am – 8 pm, Monday-Friday, HST, for HI and American Samoa Veterans and 11 am – 12 midnight S -Th, HST, for Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Veterans Multiple Newspaper, radio and TV information actions on going to get the word out to Veterans in these impacted areas on use of Choice Program. VA Pacific Islands Health Care System (VAPIHCS) is continuing to increase access to care for Veterans			Choice Cards mailed to all eligible Veterans in Insular US	December 2014 – January 2015	Completed		
			Territories Notification of change	March 2015	Completed		
				June 2015	Completed		
				July 2015	Completed		
				Call Center to be opened in April 2015 to be fully operational by July 2015	On-going	On-going	
					Summer 2015	In Progress	
				On-going	In Progress		

<p>outside of our neighboring islands through use of specialty provider visits and VTELS. By closely collaborating with our Contract or TriWest Healthcare Alliance, we are working to expand wherever possible their Patient Centered Community Care (PC3) Network and Choice providers agreement. We strive to have a complement of VA care, coupled with VA sponsored community care, to maximize rural Veterans' access. The VA expanded Contract TPA PC3 and Choice Provider Agreements are filling the gap where ORH sponsored Rural Health Extension Teams are relocating from outreach locations and being repurposed to Community Based Outpatient Clinics on Guam and American Samoa. because of ORH funding policy changes. This brings a total of almost 300 PC3/ Choice Agreement community providers now aligned with TriWest on Guam, American Samoa and the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands</p>						
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VA Response: NCA 2016 Update

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 38 Code of Federal Regulations 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: 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.						
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status as of July 2016	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	

2014 Action Plan Update Spreadsheet
ACMV 2014 Report Action Plan

2014 Action Plan Update Spreadsheet

Report Year	Recommendations	Program Office	Page	Current Status as of July 1, 2016	Projected Completed Date (Date/NA)
2014	Recommendation #1	NCA		In Progress	Closed/ongoing
2014	*Recommendation #2	ODI		Completed	Closed/ongoing
2014	Recommendation #3	VBA		In Progress	*Closed/ongoing
2014	Recommendation #4	NCA		In Progress	Closed/ongoing
2014	*Recommendation #5	VHA		In Progress	**See response to Recommendation #2, 2016 Annual Report for update.
2014	Recommendation #6	VHA		In Progress	Closed/ongoing

***See Updated Action Plan**

Recommendation #1 (Closed): 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.

Recommendation #2 (Closed): That the VA implements a cultural competency training program for all mental health providers and Veterans Service Representatives by the end of FY 2015.

Recommendation #3: That the VA update the Schedule for Rating Disabilities (Part 4, Title 38 Code of Federal Regulations) to accommodate medical research on symptomatology of certain medical conditions which have particular application to minority Veterans of differing cultures.

VA Response: VBA 2016 Update

VA is continuing to revise and update all outstanding regulations in the VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities (VASRD). VBA has drafted, or is in the process of drafting, 14 proposed rulemaking packages that will cover the 15 body systems in the VASRD. We plan to have all proposed regulations published by the end of FY 2017.

VA intends to publish final rulemakings for all VASRD body systems by the end of FY 2018.

VBA will place each VASRD body system into a 5-year cycle of staggered reviews, as illustrated in Table 3. This strategy is based on recommendations from a 2007, report prepared by the Institute of Medicine (IOM). IOM proposed a series of corrections to the existing schedule and guidance designed to improve Veterans benefits. The tables below provide the current status and the estimated major milestone dates for each of the 15 VASRD body systems.

Table 1, VASRD Concurrence Phase, describes those body systems that have concluded the working group and development phases. It provides their estimated milestone dates for concurrence. Table 2, VASRD Development Phase, describes those body systems that have not begun concurrence and their associated milestone dates.

Table 1: VASRD– Concurrence Phase

Title of Regulation	Body System and/or Conditions	Status	Next Action Estimated Completion Date
Dental and Oral Conditions	Mouth, teeth, jaws	Final rule pending internal VA concurrence	Submit to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) by February 2017
The Endocrine System	Hormone related	Final rule pending internal VA concurrence	Submit to OMB by March 2017
The Organs of Special Sense	Eye diseases and disorders	Final rule pending internal VA concurrence	Submit to OMB by January 2017
Gynecological and Breast	Reproductive disorders	Final rule pending internal VA concurrence	Submit to OMB by February 2017
Hematologic and Lymphatic	Blood elements and lymphatic vessels	Under review to incorporate public comments	Finalize revisions by June 2017

Table 2: VASRD–Development Phase

Title of Regulation	Body System and/or Conditions	Status	Next Action Estimated Completion Date
The Cardiovascular System	Heart, veins, blood vessels	Proposed rule drafted and was submitted for VA concurrence. VBA is currently revising the rule to address substantial comments and edits received during the internal concurrence process.	Submit rule for internal concurrence by June 2017
The Digestive System	Internal organs, intestine, liver, etc.	VBA is drafting proposed rule.	Complete working and development phases by March 2017 and submit rule for internal concurrence
Impairment of Auditory Acuity & The Respiratory System	Sinus disease, ear infections, pharynx, lungs and respiratory conditions.	Proposed rule drafted and submitted for VA concurrence.	Submit to OMB by April 2017
The Genitourinary System	Urinary tract, kidney, ureter, etc.	Proposed rule drafted and submitted for VA concurrence.	Submit to OMB by June 2017
Infectious Diseases, Immune Disorders and Nutritional Deficiencies	Infections – transmitted by agents.	Proposed rule drafted and was submitted for VA concurrence. VBA is currently revising the rule to address substantial comments and edits received during internal concurrence process.	Submit rule for internal concurrence by July 2017
Mental Disorders	Psychiatric and psychological disorders	Proposed rule drafted and submitted for VA concurrence.	Submit to OMB by May 2017
The Musculoskeletal System	Disorders of muscles, joints, bones and ligaments	Proposed rule drafted and was submitted for VA concurrence. VBA is currently revising the rule to address substantial comments and edits received during internal concurrence process.	Submit rule for internal concurrence by July 2017
Neurological Conditions and Convulsive Disorders	Neurological conditions and seizures	Proposed rule drafted and was submitted for VA concurrence. VBA is currently revising the rule to address substantial comments and	Submit rule for internal concurrence by June 2017

		edits received during internal concurrence process.	
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VBA Action Plan – Recommendation #3: That the VA update the Schedule for Rating Disabilities (Part 4, Title 38 Code of Federal Regulations) to accommodate medical research on symptomatology of certain medical conditions which have particular application to minority Veterans of differing cultures.

Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status
Review, revise, and update the 15 body systems VASRD, along with the Disability Benefits Questionnaires and procedural manuals	VBA		Regulations: Working group phase: research and analysis	Completed for all body systems	Completed
			Development phase: drafting of changes to the regulations	Publish all proposed regulations in the Federal Register by end of FY 2017	In Progress
			Concurrence phase: review and approval of proposed changes prior to publication as a proposed rule in the Federal Register		In Progress
			Internal Concurrence – VBA Leadership:		In Progress
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four systems remain in internal concurrence as final drafts. These are: Gyn and Breast, Endocrine, Dental and Oral Conditions, and the Organs of Special Sense (Eye). • Nine systems are in internal concurrence as proposed rules: Hematologic and Lymphatic, Cardiovascular, ENT& Respiratory, Digestive, Genitourinary, Infectious Disease, Mental Disorders, 	Pending completion by 2017 (See Tables 1 and 2)	In Progress
					In Progress

			Musculoskeletal, and Neuro & Convulsive. • One system is in external concurrence: Skin - OMB	
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Recommendation #4 (Closed): That the VA directs all VA National Cemeteries to prominently display the District of Columbia and insular flags of all United States territories as they do flags from the 50 states.

Recommendation #5: Recommend that VHA provide the Office of Health Equity (OHE) with a budget that allocates adequate funding to support projects that align with achieving OHE mission and goals.

****See response to Recommendation #2, 2016 Annual Report for update.**

Recommendation #6 (Closed): Recommend that the Veterans Health Administration conduct an assessment of the impact that prolonged clinic wait times have had on access to care by minority Veterans at selected facilities with large minority Veteran populations.

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 July 1, 2016	Projected Completed Date (Date/NA)
2013	Recommendation #1	VHA, VBA, NCA		Concur In Principle	NA
2013	Recommendation #2	ODI		Completed	Closed/Ongoing follow up actions being taken
2013	Recommendation #3	VHA		Concur In Principle	NA
2013	*Recommendation #4	VESO		Ongoing	*See 2016 Update
2013	*Recommendation #5	VBA		Closed	**See response to Recommendation #1 of 2016 ACMV Report
		OPP		Closed	*See update to Recommendation #1 of 2015 ACMV Action Plan

***See Updated Action Plans**

Recommendation #1(NA): That the VA establish a standard that requires Minority Veterans Program Coordinators (MVPCs) in catchment areas that are comprised of large minority Veterans population of 30% or more, to perform a minimum of 20 hours of targeted outreach in minority communities per month. MVPCs in catchment areas with smaller minority Veterans populations of 25% or less are required to perform a minimum of 10 hours of targeted outreach per month as defined by VA MVPC Handbook 0801, by the end of Fiscal Year 2014.

Recommendation #2 (Closed): That the VA address the significant minority employee grade disparity in the GS/GM 11-15 pay grades, Title 38 equivalent pay levels, and SES positions by the end of Fiscal Year 2014.

Recommendation #3 (NA): That the VA implement a cultural competency training program for all mental health providers by the end of Fiscal Year 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.

VA Response: VESO 2016 Update. 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.

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 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 FY 2016.

VESO Follow Up to Veterans Retention Work Group Recommendations Requested.

The work group concluded their efforts on September 30, 2015, and made the following recommendations for VA-wide implementation through the establishment of:

- A formal Veteran Affinity Group
- A Veteran-focused mentoring program
- Continuation of VETalks

VESO Action Plan – 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.						
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 2014.	VESO (OO6VE)		1. VA Veterans Affinity Group	June 2016	Implemented	
			2. Mentoring	August 2016	Awaiting implementation	
Veterans Retention Work Group provided HR&A recommendations.			3. VETalks	June 2015	On Going	

Recommendation #5 (Closed): 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.

***See update to Recommendation #1 of 2015 ACMV Action Plan.**

****See Response to Recommendation #1 of 2016 ACMV Report.**

APPENDIX B:

Advisory Committee Biographies

Melissa Castillo Hispanic

Melissa Castillo, Assistant Veterans Service Officer at the Bexar County Veterans Service Office (VSO) in San Antonio, Texas, was born and raised in Laredo, Texas until age 10 when her family moved to Converse, Texas.

Ms. Castillo enlisted in the Navy in 1994 and separated from active duty in 1996 with an honorable discharge. From 2003-2007, she served in the Navy Reserve. She completed basic training and Torpedoman's Mate "A" School at the Naval Air Station, Orlando, Florida. Her duty station included on board the USS Simon Lake (AS-33) in La Maddalena, Sardinia, Italy; Naval Submarine Base, New London, Connecticut; and Naval Operational Support Center, San Antonio, Texas.

Ms. Castillo is an accredited Veterans Service Officer and has assisted many Veterans, surviving spouses and dependents in acquiring benefits with the Department of Veterans Affairs for over 8 years. She is currently the Treasurer of the Veterans County Service Officer Association of Texas and is a member of the San Antonio Aggie Mom Club. She also served as the Assistant Regional Director for San Antonio Region, Veterans County Service Officer Association of Texas; as the Assistant Women Veterans Coordinator; as Veteran's Liaison for Congressman Ciro Rodriquez to coordinate with office staff in assisting Veterans and surviving spouse's in applying for DVA benefits; Veterans Liaison for VITAS Innovative Hospice Care; Liaison to the Gold Star Families in Bexar County; Advisor to the US Army Survivor Outreach Services Program, and Advisor to the Alamo Community College District Veterans Affairs Committee.

Ms. Castillo has received many awards and recognition which included: Appreciation Award Plaque for Outreach Service from Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 837; Outstanding Officer of the Year Award 2011-2012 from the Veterans County Service Officer Association of Texas; Appreciation Plaque for Outreach Services from Veterans of Foreign Wars from Harlandale Memorial Post 4815; Certificate of Honor from the Veterans County Service Officers Association of Texas; Certificate of Recognition and Honor from Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 76; and Certificate of Appreciation from Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 9603.

Ms. Castillo graduated from Judson High School in Converse, Texas. She graduated from Our Lady of the Lake University with a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work and is currently prospecting graduate schools to further her education while working full-time.

She has volunteered, in the local community center, coaching sports to youths. She is a proud single mother of two girls and is a mentor to many of her daughter's friends.

Benno Cleveland Alaska Native

Benno Cleveland is an Alaska Native Veteran, born in Fairbanks, Alaska. He enlisted in the Army in 1968 under the "Great Society Choice" and served two tours of duty in Dong Tam, Vietnam, where he earned a Purple Heart before being released from the service in 1970.

In 2000, Mr. Cleveland founded the Alaska Native Veterans Association and is currently serving as the President. He helps Alaska Native Veterans identify and advocate for benefits due to them from local, state and federal agencies. After dealing with PTSD himself, he now assists other Veterans in dealing with PTSD and with other health issues related to PTSD.

He has served on numerous boards: Coordinator, Spiritual Unity of the Tribes Gathering in Alaska; Vice President, Alaska Native Veterans Association from 2000-2002; Vice Chair and Chair, Midnight Sun Intertribal Pow Wow Council; Senior Vice Commander and Department Commander, Military Order of the Purple Heart; and member of the Chapel of the Four Chaplains.

In recognition of Mr. Cleveland's distinguished military service and continued service, the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) bestowed him with their "Veteran of the Year" honors in 2014 at their Annual Convention in Anchorage, Alaska.

**Many-BearsGrinder, 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.

**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.

Ginger Miller
African American

Ginger Miller is a native New Yorker and former homeless service disabled Veteran. She served in the Navy from 1989 to 1992. After taking care of her husband, a disabled Veteran who has suffered from PTSD for over a decade and experiencing homelessness with her family, she became Founder and CEO of two nonprofit organizations that serves Veterans and their families: John 14:2, Inc. and Women Veterans Interactive.

Ms. Miller's advocacy and outreach efforts have led her to host Veteran Round Tables with state Veterans agencies and elected representatives. She facilitates workshops for Veteran caregivers and frequently receives invitations to speak at various government agencies. She has served on numerous boards: Chairwoman of the Prince George's County Veterans Commission; Commissioner Maryland Commission for Women; Member of the Maryland Veterans Resilience Advisory Council; Maryland Minority Business Economic Advisory Committee; and a Member of the Maryland Caregivers Support Coordinating Council. She is currently a member of Disabled American Veteran (DAV). She was recognized by the White House as a 2013 Champion of Change for Women Veterans.

Ms. Miller received a Bachelor's Degree in Accounting from Hofstra University in Hempstead, NY and is currently pursuing a Masters in Nonprofit Management and her MBA at the University of Maryland University College.

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, Texas, 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, Texas and the father of two - Lee, Jr. and Susan.

Xiomara Sosa Hispanic

Xiomara A. Sosa is the Founder and Principal of XAS Consulting, LLC (XAS), an integrative mental healthcare and holistic wellness private practice consulting firm she founded in 2003 that serves all communities. She is a clinical mental health – forensic counselor, a nonprofit executive, a social change advocate, and a United States military Veteran. As a multicultural counselor, her cultural competency specialty is focused on working with the Hispanic, Veteran, and sexual and gender minority (LGBTQQIA) communities.

During Ms. Sosa's military career, she served in the Air Force Reserves from 1983-1986, in the Army from 1986-1988, and in the Army Reserves from 1988-1994. She was awarded the Campaign Air Force Training Ribbon, Campaign Army Service Ribbon, Army Certificate of Achievement for Meritorious Service and Army Achievement Medal for Meritorious Service.

Ms. Sosa founded two national nonprofit, social change advocacy organizations: The Get-Right! Organization, Inc. in 2010 and You Are Strong! in 2011 to effect positive social change through innovative and purposeful advocacy initiatives that serve her communities.

Ms. Sosa has served on numerous boards: Women Veteran Social Justice Board of Directors; Military Partners and Families Veteran Initiative; Semper Fidelis Health and Wellness Advisory Board Mental Health Officer; Senate Republican Conference Task Force on Hispanic Affairs Advisory Committee, and is currently a member of the Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, Inc.

She earned her Bachelor of Science Degree in Psychology from the University of Phoenix and her Master of Science Degree in Mental Health – Forensic Counseling from Walden University. She is currently a doctoral student working on her Doctor of Philosophy in Human Services – Public Health. She is a National Certified Counselor and Licensed Professional Counselor-Intern (Application Pending). She attended the USAF University Community College of the Air Force, is a graduate of the USAF Military Training Center, the USAF Technical Training Center, and the United States Army Training Center.

**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 North Carolina's Secretary of Military and Veterans Affairs. 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 TheAgenda 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**