

**Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service
National Advisory Committee Executive Committee Meeting
Thursday, October 20, 2016 – 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.**

Call to Order: Ron Rolfes, Jr., National Representative, Forty & Eight, and Chairperson, Executive Committee (EC), called the meeting to order.

Invocation: The invocation was delivered by Charles Gallina, National Representative, Knights of Columbus.

Pledge of Allegiance: The pledge was led by John Kleindienst, National Representative, Disabled American Veterans.

Agenda Review: There were no revisions to the agenda.

Roll Call: Executive Committee attendance was duly recorded as follows:

	<u>Present (P)/ Absent (A)</u>	
The American Legion		A
American Legion Auxiliary	P	
American Red Cross	P	
AMVETS	P	
AMVETS Auxiliary	P	
Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks	P	
Blinded Veterans Association	P	
Disabled American Veterans	P	
Forty & Eight	P	
Knights of Columbus	P	
Marine Corps League		A
Masonic Service Association of North America	P	
Military Order of the Cootie Auxiliary	P	
Military Order of the Purple Heart of the U.S.A., Inc.	P	
National Society of Daughters of the American Revolution	P	
Paralyzed Veterans of America		A
Soldier's Angels	P	
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.	P	
Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary	P	
Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.	P	

VA and Other Staff and Guests Present:

Robert McDonald, Secretary for Veterans Affairs
David Shulkin, Under Secretary for Health
Vivieca Wright Simpson, Chief of Staff, Veterans Health Administration, VACO
CDR Gordon Blighton, Assistant Chief of Staff / Director for Resource Management and
Comptroller, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center

Mary Barcikowski, Voluntary Service Specialist and NAC Meeting Planner Trainee, VA
Maryland Healthcare System
Jonathan Barczyk, Voluntary Service Specialist and NAC Meeting Planner Trainee, VA
Maine Healthcare System
Katie Bowen, Home of the Brave
Tony Burtley, Voluntary Service Specialist, VACO
Elizabeth "Liz" Cazares, Voluntary Service Specialist and NAC Meeting Planner
Trainee, South Texas Veterans Healthcare Systems
Sabrina C. Clark, Director, Voluntary Service Office, VACO
Todd Desgrosseilliers, Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing
Christine Feeser, Voluntary Service Specialist, Voluntary Service Office, VACO
Tyrone Green, Program Analyst, Voluntary Service Office, VACO
Lorna Hatch, Chief, VA Voluntary Service, VA Maine Healthcare System, Togus, ME
Ginny Hoover, Voluntary Service Specialist, VACO
Cherelle Mitchell, Voluntary Service Specialist Trainee, Washington, D.C. VAMC
Mary Jo Munnelly, Lead Staff Assistant, Voluntary Service Office, VACO
Thomas Muir, Director, Support Services, MyVA
Karen O'Neal, Chief, Voluntary Service, Erie VAMC
Gina B. Screen, Deputy Executive Director, VHA Office of Communications
Kevin Stanford, Health Systems Specialist, VACO
Camilla Thompson, Chief, VAVS, James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital
Nathan Witt, Chief, Voluntary Service, Bay Pines VA Healthcare System
Tyler Wright, Points of Light

Goals and Objectives: Mr. Rolfes presented the goals and objectives of the Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) National Advisory Committee (NAC) Executive Committee (EC) meeting as listed in the meeting booklet:

1. Act as the governing body of the VAVS NAC in this interim period between Annual Meetings.
2. Be supportive of the NAC's primary objective of advising VA on how to coordinate and promote volunteer activities within VA facilities and matters relating to volunteerism.
3. Be apprised of programmatic issues pending within Voluntary Service and Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Headquarters since the 2016 Annual Meeting and to hold discussion on any appropriate advisory actions necessary.
4. Plan EC supportive actions to ensure follow-up on issues or business items from the 2016 Annual Meeting.
5. Provide an opportunity for the VAVS NAC EC to hear from and have face-to-face time with VA senior leadership.

6. Receive an update from the James H. Parke Memorial Foundation Board concerning the Youth Scholarship program.
7. Receive an update from VAVS Partners, Inc. concerning the Annual Meeting.
8. Assess the 2016 Annual Meeting, finalize plans for the 2017 Annual Meeting, and discuss site selection for the 2018 Annual Meeting and beyond.
9. Review and assess submitted Recommendations intended for the 2017 Annual Meeting and prepare a report on same for all NAC National Representatives.
10. Receive reports from the: Recommendations Subcommittee, Volunteer of the Year Nomination Subcommittee, Recruitment Subcommittee, Membership Subcommittee, and the Ad Hoc Partnership Subcommittee.
11. Update the NAC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) as deemed necessary.
12. Discuss, as a group, any area within the VAVS program in need of additional progress.

Additions/Revisions to Minutes of EC Meeting held May 2016: Mr. Rolfes asked for additions or revisions to the minutes. Wade Davis, Deputy National Representative, Blinded Veterans Association, requested that the representative from the BVA be listed as present. Del “Bulldog” Turner, National Representative, Military Order of the Purple Heart of the U.S.A., moved to accept the minutes with the change to roll call; the motion was seconded by W. G. “Bill” Kilgore, National Representative, AMVETS. **The motion carried.**

NAC Meeting Planners Introduction: Sabrina Clark, Director, Voluntary Service Office, introduced several new team members to the committee. The VHA Office of Communications has been going through leadership changes recently. Michael Odle, Executive Director for Communications, has been activated and placed on active duty and is replaced in the interim by Acting Executive Director Maureen Heard. Gina Screen is the new Deputy Executive Director of Communications. Ms. Screen thanked the committee for welcoming her, and said that the work of volunteers is critical to her role. Christine Feeser, Program Specialist, VA Central Office, introduced several new staff members who will serve as the NAC Meeting Planner Trainees: Elizabeth Cazares, Jonathan Barczyk, and Mary Barcikowski.

Review of the 70th NAC Annual Meeting Evaluations: Lorna Hatch, Chief, Voluntary Service, VA Maine Healthcare System, reviewed the evaluation from the 70th Annual Meeting. Reviews of the event meeting were overall very favorable, with 95 percent agreeing that the meeting was excellent or very good, and having met its objectives. Several high points that respondents mentioned included the Human Hug Project, Ms. Ginny Hoover’s inspiring presentation, the social media workshop, and the networking opportunities. It was recommended that the Health and Information Fair stay open a little

longer. Numerous participant comments indicated they found that the workshops were geared toward staff instead of volunteers.

Several areas of improvement highlighted by the responses include more time between the meetings to eat, holding registration open for longer, offering different workshops for VA staff and volunteers and organizing the roundtables so presenters move from table to table rather than participants moving around. The attendees found the hotel food, cleanliness, service and accommodations to be satisfactory, with some of the chief complaints being cost, room temperature inconsistency and lengthy wait times. Regarding the volunteer resource management presentation, respondents found it to be thought-provoking and effective, and suggested showing it to VHA leadership.

Special Guest Presentation: CDR Gordon Blighton, Assistant Chief of Staff/Director for Resource Management and Comptroller, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, provided a brief biographical sketch and shared his experience as a recovering wounded Veteran. He talked about the important role VA plays in taking care of active duty service members as they transition to the private sector, the challenges facing Veterans suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and thanked the members of the Committee for all the work they provide in helping VA and our nation's Veterans. Various Committee members thanked CDR Blighton for sharing his story with the Committee, and reiterated the important need that volunteers fill within VA. Several members said that CDR Blighton's story is very common among Veterans, and that it is of vital importance to help Veterans receive the rehabilitation they need.

(Recess.)

(Whereupon, the meeting was resumed.)

Review of the 70thNAC Annual Meeting Evaluations (Continued): Ms. Hatch continued her presentation from earlier. Evaluation respondents found the Maximizing Collaboration workshop presentation to hold their attention and present them with new ideas they can use. Several specific comments included that the speaker kept the audience engaged, the presentation was informative and beneficial, but lacking handouts to help members take plans back to their organizations.

Respondents agreed that the Reducing Volunteer Wait Times workshop was informative and the presenters were helpful, but were more split on whether the presentation held their attention. Several comments said the workshop pertained more to VAVS staff and not volunteers, but agreed that the topic was important nonetheless. Meeting participants almost universally agreed that the social media workshop was extremely helpful and informative, and it was perhaps not long enough to cover so much valuable information. One comment suggested including hands-on training on how to interact with various social media platforms. Finally, evaluation respondents agreed that the new VAVS Representative/staff training workshop was informative and helpful, but opinions on the level of audience participation were mixed. Several respondents commented on the expertise of the presenters and the dedication they showed to their topic.

VAVS Partners' Treasurer's Report: Rebecca Wischmeyer, National Representative, Military Order of the Cooties Auxiliary and Treasurer, VAVS Partners, Inc., gave the treasurer's report.

71st Annual Meeting Plan: Camilla Thompson, Chief, VAVS, James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital and Ms. Hatch provided a quick overview of what to expect for the 71st Annual Meeting. The James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital in Tampa Bay, Florida will serve as the host facility for the meeting, and staff there is excited to welcome the NAC to the Sunshine State. The Hilton Tampa Downtown will be the location for the meeting, a modern hotel that is well situated to go sightseeing on the water, get some seafood, or just explore downtown Tampa. Ms. Hatch presented a breakdown of the costs for break sponsorships. The numbers included sales tax because some states don't accept the meeting's tax-exempt status. She also gave a meal breakdown and covered those costs as well.

- EC Meeting Break – AM Break: VAVS Partners, Inc.
- Wednesday Evening Reception: The Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks
- Thursday – AM Break: Military Order of the Purple Heart, Inc.
- Thursday – PM Break: AMVETS
- Friday – AM Break: Knights of Columbus
- Friday – PM Break: Disabled American Veterans

Mr. Kilgore requested more accurate numbers for break sponsorship costs, noting it is difficult to allocate funds when the exact costs aren't known. Ms. Hatch said that VAVS won't know the number of participants until registration is over, but it's generally better to budget for more to cover unexpected surges in numbers. Ms. Wischmeyer added that last year VAVS asked the organizations that donated if additional funds over what they allocated could be used for other items, and they all agreed. Mrs. Clark said VAVS is always looking for partnering organizations to sponsor, even if they aren't on the NAC EC. Ms. Feeser said the 72nd meeting will also be in Tampa, and the 73rd and 74th will be in San Antonio, Texas. Mrs. Clark thanked the meeting planners for thinking so far in advance, and relayed a request from Grand Rapids to host the 75th meeting. There is a strong Veteran presence in the area, as well as many organizations that are eager to help sponsor and support the meeting. There aren't many venues in the Grand Rapids area, so it's important for the meeting planners to have some flexibility with the budget and look far out. Mr. Kilgore moved to give the meeting planners permission to conduct a site visit in Grand Rapids in the coming year; the motion was seconded by Ms. Wischmeyer. **The motion carried.**

Strategic Partnerships Panel: Katie Bowen, Home of the Brave, Tyler Wright, Points of Light, and Todd Desgrosseilliers, Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, gave overviews of their organizations and answered questions from the Committee. Ms. Bowen said Home of the Brave was established by employees in 2012 as a community service project within the overall Veterans' Program at Hewlett Packard. The campaign engages employees in thanking Veterans for their service on or around Veterans Day through planned activities and patient visits at VA medical facilities and by donations of basic

items. The campaign was moved to Hewlett Packard when the company was founded in November of 2015. The organization's mission is to thank those to whom we owe our freedom. The group carries this out by volunteering, signs of appreciation such as activity funds and a Veteran of the Week program, and assistance through the form of Honor Packs and the Boot Campaign Mission. Home of the Brave has a presence in over 100 VA medical facilities and in 43 states as well as Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico. Their yearly impact has increased dramatically over the past several years from 200 volunteers and 3,820 Veterans honored in 2012 to 678 volunteers and 27,000 Veterans honored in 2015.

Tyler Wright shared his background with the Committee, and explained how his long relationship with VA led to him joining Points of Lights. The organization is dedicated to engaging people and resources in solving social problems through voluntary service, and has several Veteran-focused programs. Through the help of AmeriCorps members, Points of Light helps teach volunteers how to mentor and guide Veterans and their families. The group inspires Veterans and their families to serve as volunteer leaders, leveraging their talents to address community needs. They currently help 6,000 general community volunteers, and offer grants to nonprofit organizations to carry out service projects. Many AmeriCorps members stay on with their host organization as staff members.

Todd Desgrosseilliers was a participant himself in Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, and has seen the program working firsthand and understood its benefits. Its mission is the physical and emotional rehabilitation of our service members, using fly-fishing as a mechanism. After playing a video with a testimonial from a participant, Mr. Desgrosseilliers explained that Project Healing Waters is around the country and has an international site in Germany, and works with over 150 VA organizations (including VA medical facilities, Vet Centers, Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs), etc.). The organization has seen 10 to 15 percent growth each of the past four years and hopes to continue to expand. In the project, participants attend weekly meetings and learn how to build a rod, tie a fly, and ultimately how to fly-fish. The main focus, though, is coming together with people that care about you and are going through the same process.

Mrs. Clark highlighted the America's Warrior Partnership Symposium that had convened in Atlanta one month before the NAC EC meeting. There were over 300 VSOs at the meeting and it's therefore important for VAVS to connect with the participants there. VAVS has already reached out to the Symposium, and will have a bigger presence next year. Several Committee members expressed interest in the panel members' organizations and said they would reach out to partner with them. Janice Holm, Deputy National Representative, Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary, said there is a lot of useful information that is being lost because VSOs aren't reporting it, mainly because the reporting system will capture the information of the large VSOs, but not the small ones. Mrs. Clark said VAVS is working on a number of enhancements, and they're aware of the challenges that a lack of good data presents.

(Recess.)

(Whereupon, the meeting was resumed.)

Subcommittee Reports:

Recommendations: George Braatz, National Representative, Masonic Service Association of North America, reported that the Recommendations Subcommittee has not received any proposed recommendations, and if a Committee member has a recommendation they would like to submit, they should do so as soon as possible

NAC Volunteer of the Year: Mr. Rolfes reported to the Committee that the application deadline for Volunteer of the Year is December 31st. Ms. Morgan asked for comment on some of the common issues that cause applications to be disqualified. Mr. Rolfes said the most common one is applications not using the NAC organization's official letterhead.

Membership: Mr. Turner reported that the NAC has five categories of membership: Service Member, Associate Service Member, Donor Member, Associate Donor Member, and Adjunct Member. There is also an additional category of Honorary Member, which is used to recognize past VAVS NAC service to those organizations no longer able to meet current minimum criteria for active membership. Only Service Members have voting privileges, and members are expected to maintain such support at or above the qualifying level of each category in order to remain on the NAC.

In addition to these categories, there is also a NAC Strategic Partner Category. The membership subcommittee is in the process of determining the criteria by which an organization achieves this status. Several questions including whether membership should be by invitation only, if the organization must complete a due diligence worksheet, if they will be allocated a representative and a deputy, how long the term of their membership should be, and whether they will be voting or non-voting. The subcommittee will convene between the fall and spring meetings to finalize the criteria.

Mr. Turner provided numbers about several organizations that will potentially qualify for strategic partnership, honorary membership and donor and associate donor status for next year. He also covered several organizations that would drop categories as well. The question brought forth before the Committee was the status of several organizations that had not been in attendance for at least three NAC Annual Meetings in a row.

Ms. Hoover said that the Voluntary Service System (VSS) does not keep track of organization donation reports, and makes it difficult to tell if a donor is fulfilling the criteria requirements. Mrs. Clark said VA is interested in VAVS conducting proper research on organizations before inviting them to the NAC or partnering with VA. She added that members of the EC should also be involved in the vetting process. Mr. Gallina said there are not many donor organizations on the roster, so it shouldn't be too difficult to approach them directly for information. He added that it's incumbent on the EC to drive the issue of dropping members and making a recommendation. Mr. Turner

moved to drop the four donor members listed in the meeting packet from membership, and encourage the four potential donor members to increase to 15 categorical sites, as well as let them know they are being observed and they need to provide proper documentation; the motion was seconded by Mr. Gallina. **The motion carried.**

EC Teleconference Schedule 2017: Tony Burtley said the next NAC EC meeting will be in March 2017 and that staff is considering sending out the EC welcome package electronically from now on. He also stressed that the Committee member organizations should continue to communicate the work they have done since the last meeting to the VAVS staff.

(Recess.)

(Whereupon, the meeting was resumed.)

Commemoration: Ms. Hatch was recognized for attending her last NAC EC meeting as a VA employee because she will be retiring. VAVS staff, EC members, and Under Secretary Shulkin thanked her for her service to the Committee and VA.

VHA Update: David J. Shulkin, Under Secretary for Health, and Vivieca Wright-Simpson, Chief of Staff, Veterans Health Administration, led a question and answer session with the Committee members to hear their concerns. Mr. Kleindienst asked Under Secretary Shulkin to look into cutting down on the time it takes to get volunteers working in VA facilities. It sometimes takes six to twelve weeks to have a volunteer vetted because they're not an employee. Several Committee members agreed with this difficulty, but added it varies depending on the VA facility. Overall, there needs to be greater consistency in the system. Mr. Kleindienst suggested creating a form for volunteers to take to their primary care physician, letting them bypass occupational health. Ms. Vicki Sarracino, National Representative, Soldiers' Angels, added that some volunteers who work at CBOCs need to drive to a VA hospital to take a TB test, and this can be very time consuming. Mr. Turner said that excessive burden on having volunteers receive ID cards makes them less interested in volunteering. Under Secretary Shulkin said that some issues with receiving ID cards are partly attributable to needing more equipment and needing more staff to oversee the process. Ms. Sarracino stressed the importance of making the process uniform across VA. Mr. Gallina said the indoctrination process for volunteers is broken and needs fixing, and that the ad hoc committee is creating a process to put out an approach to standardize the process. Ms. Holm said that there is a lot of waste of inpatient food because Veterans receive very little or no choice with meals and therefore don't eat the food. Several Committee members said that it varies based upon location, but overall the situation is not good.

Mr. Gallina said that VAVS would like to improve its retention and future succession planning for VAVS Program Manager/Supervisor/Chief positions, and would like to revise/reissue the VAVS position classification guide so that VAVS Managerial positions can be classified from GS12 to GS14 levels at field facilities. However, VA will not permit the reissue of classification guides any longer. VAVS Chief positions, after being

vacated from someone that was at the GS12-14 level, are often being recruited for at lower grade levels such as the GS11 level. Because of this, we are not attracting the high quality applicants that are needed to fill these key VAVS managerial positions. Ms. Feeser said there is a task group of field staff working on this issue. OPM made a nationwide decision that all Voluntary Service managerial positions will be at max GS-11 level. The task group is looking at ways to fix this, and they will be considering developing a memo to the Office of the General Counsel to inquire about allowing VAVS positions to possibly be classified as Hybrid Title 38, or to possibly be moved to another classification series other than the 301 series. Ms. Wright-Simpson said that these downgrades have been happening throughout VA across as many as 17 occupations, and that Voluntary Service Chiefs/Managers have various responsibilities that support their being at a higher grade. Several Committee members asked question relating to specific issues at various VA facilities. Ruth Walters, National Representative, American Red Cross, asked how the VA compares to the private sector in terms of hiring statistics. Under Secretary Shulkin said that VHA is having a tough time filling the positions they need, especially physicians. While the pay levels are not the same as the private sector, they are not dramatically lower. VHA has received Title 38 authority to conduct a market survey when salaries are below market prices and make adjustments.

James Moss, National Representative, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S., asked for an update on the VISN realignment. Under Secretary Shulkin said that 21 VISNs have been reduced down to 18, and that the majority of VISNs fall within state lines. The VISNs are split into five districts, making it easier for Veterans to get service around Veterans Benefits Administration, VHA and the Nation Cemetery Administration. Mr. Kleindienst asked what role telehealth is playing in VHA care. Under Secretary Shulkin said that VHA is the largest telehealth provider in the country, spending roughly \$1 billion a year on telehealth, and this number is expanding. In places where VA can't hire doctors, telehealth helps relieve the burden on VA facilities. Ms. Wischmeyer asked why VA often takes longer than the private sector to pay home health providers. Under Secretary Shulkin said when VA pays community providers, the funds come from nine different funding allocations, causing delays. The process has been streamlined, though, and while only 60% of bills were paid within 30 days, that number is now 89%.

(Recess.)

(Whereupon, the meeting was resumed.)

MyVA Overview: Thomas Muir, Director, Support Services, MyVA, provided an update on the MyVA program. MyVA is trying to change the culture of VA to deliver services when and where Veterans want them, and VSOs play an important role in helping VA understand what Veterans need. This move is away from a rules-based organization to a principles-based one. This change comes in three areas of difference: the Veterans' Experience, the Employees' Experience, and the Business of VA.

The MyVA program has focused on making sure Veterans can trust VA to do what's right for them. This means achieving same-day access in health care clinics in all VA

medical facilities, increased access to mental health services and care in the community. VA opened a new suicide prevention call center in Atlanta, Georgia to ensure that no calls to the hotline are ever blocked. Veteran homelessness is down across the country, with many cities now Veteran homeless-free. This initiative worked by getting Veterans into a home first, and then treating their problems second. Vets.gov has also been redesigned to be easier for Veterans to use and was designed mobile-first. Veterans can now enroll for VA healthcare on their smartphone, no paperwork required.

To be an exceptional customer service organization, you need to be a great place to work. In the past year, in terms of employee satisfaction in ratings, VA has improved in 41 out of 44 measures. This also means working on finding good people to help run medical facilities. 85% of medical facility leadership roles are filled right now, and new leadership at the VA Central Office (VACO) has focused on making VA a Veteran-centric organization.

In terms of how VA operates as a business, the Department is starting to be run like an enterprise, and is returning value to Veterans. The medical/surgical supply chain is being transformed, with its focus being to put money back into the hands of VA facility directors to invest in Veteran-facing activities. VA is expediting the Board of Veterans Appeals backlog, and is modernizing its systems. VA is also pushing certain IT processes into the cloud, while still securing Veterans' data.

Mr. Muir ended with a quick note on the upcoming presidential administration transition. The MyVA team doesn't think the new Secretary will eliminate the program, but their main focus is talking to the Veterans to see if the changes they've implemented are working. If they are, then hopefully MyVA will stay. But if they're not working, then MyVA needs to change.

Mr. Turner asked what services VA provides for the employees who work at the suicide prevention call center. Mr. Muir said that while there was previously a gap there, they do have mental health professionals who talk to the employees and help them through the stress of helping other people. Mr. Kleindienst suggested that VA create a team that works exclusively on death benefits, screening claims to help walk the widow/widower through the process. Mrs. Clark said that staff in VACO may initiate the partnership and develop the overarching MOUs, but that the voluntary service field staff on the ground are the ones who operationalize it. In addition, the volunteering timekeeping system is antiquated and while VAVS has worked on implementing enhancements, they've only gone partway and are \$1.3 million short of the final increment. Mr. Muir said he can help find the money to improve the time system. Mr. Kleindienst asked if there is a way to make the eBenefits program more user-friendly. Mr. Muir said VA is working on it, and that eBenefits need to be accessible from a smart device.

(Recess.)

Friday, November 21, 2016 – 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

VAVS Report: Mrs. Clark provided an update on VAVS. The Strategic Framework of Leadership, Collaboration, and Impact (LCI) has worked for VAVS as the language for how to develop their work. The three pillars of the framework are leadership, collaboration and impact. Under the leadership pillar, VAVS is building up the credibility of the chiefs and receiving a recommitment to their work from VHA leadership. One project is creating a competency model which informs staff in the field of the skills, knowledge and abilities required by the individuals who do a certain job. The VAVS Leadership Board is comprised of chiefs from across the country which meets annually to develop volunteer organization strategies. Training is likewise critical to VAVS, as they are losing more chiefs than they're gaining. The VAVS Academy is an annual program for new managers and staff to teach the nuts and bolts of running a volunteer program. VAVS is also looking into creating on-demand training to make it more accessible. The paperwork is ready for approval; the only thing lacking is a strategy for how to roll it out and the necessary technology.

Under collaboration, the Office of Strategic Partnerships continues to work on hearing the ideas of contributors and inviting new voices to the discussion. VAVS is constantly evolving, coming up with solutions and finding successful programs where they can show what they're doing. VAVS also works with internal organizations within VA to achieve its goals, such as the new Center for Compassionate Innovation. Finally, in terms of impact, VAVS has to be willing to have difficult conversations (such as telling an older volunteer that they should retire from volunteering), and put volunteers in places where they're strategically important. With any new venture, VA must ask itself "What strategic priority does this address for the organization?" Likewise, VAVS needs to know how to tell the story of VA. To this end, they have started work on high production quality videos showcasing what VA has to offer.

Various members brought up examples of volunteer work being done at their local VA and discussed how these programs can be applied nationwide.

(Recess.)

(Whereupon, the meeting was resumed.)

VA Secretary's Report: Robert McDonald, Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs, reported on VA's recent transformation efforts. VA is moving itself from a rules-based organization to a principles-based one, ultimately focusing on the Veteran and their family. Any good customer service organization is principles-based, and VA is focused on making the Veterans, their customers, want to use their healthcare. This effort comes through five parts: improving the Veteran experience, improving the Employee experience, improving internal support services, establishing a culture of continuous improvement, and enhancing strategic partnerships. The VSOs are a key part of VA's external partnerships, and the Department has been consulting with them and other key stakeholders on how to implement change. To that end, the VSOs can help VA by:

- Aligning their efforts to achieve MyVA Strategies.

- Daring to innovate and imagine.
- Capitalizing on their experience and expertise.
- Helping VA deliver the best customer services for Veterans.
- Helping VA promote interests of all Veterans.
- Exploring opportunities for productive partnerships and collaboration, locally and nationally.

Mr. Rolfes asked how many of VHA's appointments are through the Choice Program. Secretary McDonald said about 20% of appointments on any given day are care in the community. Very few Veterans want all of their care in the community; most only use it for selective services. Several members thanked the Secretary for the work he's done and commended his vision for improving VA. Ms. Holm raised concerns with hiring OB/GYN doctor for women Veterans. Secretary McDonald said while some facilities have female care coordinators, there is still a lack of OB/GYNs and for now VA needs to create more relationships with community providers. The Secretary has made transforming VA to address the needs of female Veterans a top priority for the Department.

Mr. Gallina stressed the importance of the VAVS service chiefs, who are essential for VA voluntary service programs to run, but in too many programs the positions are either downgraded or left vacant. Secretary McDonald agreed with Mr. Gallina, and said it's important for VA job descriptions to be written properly. If the description is wrong, then you won't get the right candidates for the job.

Mr. Davis asked the Secretary what he is doing to address the large number of vacancies in the VA system. Secretary McDonald said he has opened up vacancies to outside applicants, and that many new VA medical facility directors are former military Medical Service Corps Chiefs. He has also talked to the Department of Defense about informing VA when medical chiefs retire, and he is trying to convince Congress to give VA Title 38 hiring authority for medical chief positions.

Mary Morgan, National Representative, Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks, praised the HUD-VASH program, and said she is interested in seeing it expanded to other departments. Secretary McDonald described the program as essential; it's been able to decrease Veteran homelessness by half since 2010. Another helpful program is the Supportive Services for Veterans and their Families (SSVF).

Ms. Hoover said VAVS has spent years trying to get funds to update their archaic software system, VSS, and was finally awarded money in FY 2015. However, the FY 2017 budget doesn't include funding. The system is currently still not rebuilt, how can VAVS get the funding it needs? Secretary McDonald said to speak with himself, LaVerne Council (Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology) and Ron Thompson (Deputy IT Chief) and they'll find a solution.

(Recess.)

(Whereupon, the meeting was resumed.)

Suggestions for Workshop and Plenary Sessions for the 2017 NAC Meeting: Mrs. Clark presented the Committee with suggestions for topic areas and speakers for the plenary sessions. These included the Center for Women Veterans, the Center for Compassionate Innovation, an overview of the MyVA program, a discussion into the challenges faced by rural Veterans, the Office of Integrated Health, the Office of Public Affairs and a presentation from Veteran Experiences Officers. For the workshops, Mrs. Clark proposed sessions on vetting strategic partners, general post funds, leadership training and communications and public affairs.

Subcommittee Reports:

Recruitment: Mr. Gallina reported that the downward trend of volunteers logging hours has continued through FY 2016. This is impacted by several factors: policies, procedures, economic consideration and a lack of commitment to retention and recruitment at all levels. Mr. Gallina provided several recruitment tips:

- Develop and maintain organization Representative/Deputy Representative Training Brief.
- Regularly review and update Representative/Deputy Representative rosters by VA medical facility.
- Continuously coordinate with VAVS Chiefs to reconcile with local VA medical facility records of certified Representatives.
- Review and update recruitment materials; intergenerational focus.
- Develop or expand organization websites to promote VAVS program; maximum use of “social networking” media.
- Post VA/VAVS news releases, PSAs, film clips, etc. highlighting important new or upgraded benefits, services.
- Review all quarterly reports for Representative/Deputy Representative attendance; replace nonperformers.
- Review AJRs for up/down trends; number of Regularly Scheduled and Occasional volunteers and hours; cash/non-cash donations.
- Intergenerational volunteer recruitment.

Retention starts immediately with recruitment, and can be done through incentive programs, eliminating barriers for the use of volunteers, meaningful work with positive feedback and recognition of a job well done. There are several key programs that improve Veterans’ experience and access that offer volunteer opportunities. These include eliminating homelessness among Veterans, comprehensive caregiver support services, No Veteran Dies Alone, and supporting women Veterans’ initiatives and the Center for Women Veterans.

Ad Hoc Partnership: Mr. Gallina reported that the Ad Hoc Subcommittee had recently worked on two recommendations: this first one to provide appropriate authorization that permits the VA Voluntary Service to be included in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). CFC’s mission is to support and promote philanthropy

through a program that is employee-focused, cost-effective and effective in providing all federal employees the opportunity to improve the quality of life. VAVS Service Chiefs can currently solicit, accept, and receive donations made to the VA and healthcare systems for the benefit of Veterans in their facility.

The recommendation reads: the Secretary of Veterans Affairs should fully support the action to allow VAVS to be included in the CFC. The NAC membership further recommends that VA take action to secure either OPM changes to permit such inclusion or to seek an Executive Order to be able to allow this. Mr. Turner moved for the recommendation to be passed to the Recommendations Subcommittee to work on and present to the full NAC at the Annual Meeting; the motion was seconded by Mr. Moss. **The motion carried.**

The second recommendation was created to increase involvement in strategic partnerships with newer, post-9/11 Veteran groups. The recommendation modifies the NAC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) to incorporate language that would address this recommendation, and include updated criteria for membership. The recommended language change is in accordance with the guidance published in VA Directive 0008 and VHA Directive 1098. It talks to the due diligence that will be conducted on the applicant organization for membership on the NAC, and allows the NAC to set membership criteria to accommodate groups that don't meet the particular model currently set forth. Mr. Turner moved for the recommendation to be passed to the SOP Subcommittee, with the Membership Subcommittee working to change the definition of service organization; the motion was seconded by several members. **The motion carried.** Ms. Kranzow moved to change the facility requirements for donor member organizations from 30 to 25 facilities; the motion was seconded by Mr. Gallina. **The motion carried.**

Review of FY 2016 Data: Ms. Hoover reviewed the data. In the recent partially completed update to the VSS system, the "on the rolls" number of total volunteers is highly inaccurate, because the system doesn't effectively track volunteers coming on or off the rolls. The number is a best guess by the system looking at the data for the day the numbers are pulled. The number of logging hours is accurate, however. Regardless, the number of volunteers has gone down from the previous year.

Unfinished Business: None

New Business:

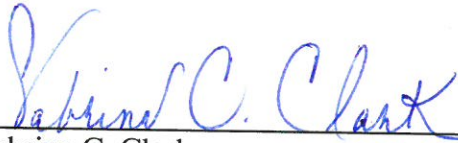
EC Committee Appointments: Mrs. Clark said VAVS will be going through the organizations that are eligible for EC membership and replacing the organizations listed for their second year appointment. This will be done by letter before the end of the year and the staff will review the organizations that are eligible. These are appointments, meaning the organizations dropping off can become eligible to join the EC again, and leaving the EC doesn't prohibit organizations from being part of subcommittees. This is not a dismissal, but rather an opportunity for anyone on the NAC to participate. If VAVS

doesn't give those organizations that are eligible to participate an opportunity to sit on the EC, they become disengaged.

Subcommittee Appointments: Mr. Rolfes officially welcomed Ms. Sarracino as the Chairpersonship of the Recruitment Subcommittee, and welcomed Mr. Gallina, Christi Hillman, National Representative, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and Ms. Morgan as members of the subcommittee. He also welcomed Mr. Kleindienst as the chairpersonship of the Membership Subcommittee, and welcomed Mr. Turner and Mr. Moss as members of the subcommittee.

Vice Chair Appointment: Mr. Rolfes reiterated that Mr. Gallina is the Vice Chair of the NAC EC.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 11:57 a.m.



Sabrina C. Clark
Director, Voluntary Service Office
Acting Chairperson, National Advisory Committee

2/22/17

Date