

**REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MINORITY VETERANS**



**Biennial Report 2020**

This page has been intentionally left blank.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b><u>Subjects</u></b>	<b><u>Page</u></b>
Letter from the Advisory Committee Chair	4
<u>Part I</u> Executive Summary	5
<u>Part II</u> Summary of 2020 Recommendations	6
<u>Part III</u> ACMV 2020 Recommendations, Rationales, and VA Responses	7
<u>Part IV</u> Agenda: 2018 Washington, D.C. Departmental Briefings	14
<u>Part V</u> Agenda: Houston Site Visit	19
<u>Part VI</u> Houston Town Hall Meeting Summary	22
<u>Part VII</u> Exit Briefing: Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center, Houston Regional Office, and Houston National Cemetery	23
<u>Part VIII</u> Agenda: 2019 Washington, D.C. Departmental Briefings	24
Appendix A: Action Plans Follow Up: 2017 and 2018 (as of July 2020)	29
Appendix B: Advisory Committee Biographies	39

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

Dear Secretary Wilkie,

I am truly honored to serve as the Chairwoman for the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans (ACMV), and I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve our Nation's minority Veterans and their families.

The enclosed 2020 Biennial Report of the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans (ACMV) includes four recommendations which reflect key issues identified by the Committee through briefings received at the VA Central Office, a site visit to the VA facilities in Houston, Texas including a town hall meeting conducted at the United Way of Greater Houston and recent discussions regarding COVID-19.

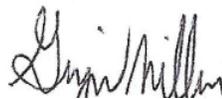
The needs of minority Veterans are as diverse as this multicultural population. The ACMV's 2020 Biennial Report captures some of the most pressing issues affecting minority Veterans with recommendations focused on the delivery of services to Veterans in remote areas, data collection, outreach, and delivery of benefits and services.

2020 marks my fifth year serving on the ACMV and my second year as Chairwoman. The past five years have afforded me the opportunity to work alongside dedicated Veterans and the fantastic staff at the Center for Minority Veterans. More importantly, I've had the chance to witness the VA implement real effective change to enhance the lives of minority Veterans by implementing previous committee recommendations.

The ACMV is thankful for your leadership, as well as your openness to implementing new ways to improve the lives of minority Veterans. Thank you for approving and supporting the 2019 National Minority Veterans Summit as well as the planned 2021 Summit. The Committee is also deeply appreciative of the Center for Minority Veterans for the tremendous team effort they have put into ensuring the summit was a huge success, and we also want to thank the VA leadership across the board.

On behalf of the Committee, I express my sincere appreciation for allowing us the privilege to serve our Nation's minority Veterans.

Sincerely,



Ginger Miller  
Chairwoman  
Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans

## Part I. Executive Summary

The 2020 Biennial 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 ACMV fulfilled its requirement to conduct a minimum of two meetings during fiscal year (FY) 2019 in accordance with P.L. 103-446, and the VA ACMV charter March 25, 2020. In FY 2020, ACMV was only able to conduct one of two meetings due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Specifically, ACMV met on December 11-13, 2018, at VA Central Office (VACO) in Washington, DC, conducted a site visit in Houston, Texas from April 9 to 11, 2019, and met again on December 3-5, 2019, at VA Central Office (VACO). The meetings at VACO, included briefings from the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) and select Staff Offices. Ex Officio members from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) provided briefings on their respective missions and services provided to minority Veterans at the VACO meetings. During the Houston site visit, ACMV received briefings and facility tours at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center (VAMC) Houston Regional Office, and the Houston National Cemetery. On the afternoon of April 10, 2019, ACMV and representatives from the Michael E. DeBakey VAMC Houston Regional Office and the Houston National Cemetery responded to questions from minority Veterans and provided updates on current VA initiatives during a town hall meeting conducted at the United Way of Greater Houston Community Resource Center.

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 four 2020 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:

- Expand the telehealth capabilities to the Compact of Free Association (COFA) Nations, Palau, the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia to include the required tools and services to run a successful telehealth system. Timeframe to complete the telehealth system package is 2 years, by the end of December 2022.
- VHA needs to track and report on the impact of COVID-19 on minority Veterans to identify and address racial/ethnic health disparities.
- With the Veterans' Legacy Program, NCA needs to establish a minimum of four working agreements among institutions that serve the minority Veteran population. NCA should complete this recommendation by December 31, 2021, with annual reports starting December 31, 2022. NCA should publish results annually starting January 1, 2023.
- Requests that NCA modify four of its application forms to capture race and ethnicity information. NCA should complete this recommendation by December 31, 2021 with annual reports starting December 31, 2022. NCA should publish results annually starting January 1, 2023.

## Part II. Summary of 2020 Recommendations

**Recommendation #1:** That VA expand the telehealth capabilities to the Compact of Free Association (COFA) Nations, Palau, the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia by providing: 1) the required bandwidth to allow access virtually as some of the islands do not have fiber optic connections; 2) provide island Veterans with necessary hardware (to include iPads, computers and all accessories) to access telehealth services; 3) assign health care providers to Veterans through telehealth; 4) provide and implement an expedited assessment on the possibility of fielding telehealth soon; 5) provide travel pay to appointments as other Veterans in the U.S. receive this benefit; 6) provide uniform allowance renewal by teleconference; and 7) conduct semi-Annual Town Hall meetings for benefits. The time frame to complete the telehealth system package is 2 years, by the end of December 2022.

**Recommendation #2:** That VHA track and report on the impact of COVID-19 on minority Veterans. Specifically identify and address racial/ethnic health disparities and will further categorize the impact of COVID-19 on minority Veterans by the era served.

**Recommendation #3:** That VA require the National Cemetery Administration establish a minimum of four working agreements among institutions that serve the minority Veteran population. NCA should complete this recommendation by December 31, 2021 with annual reports starting December 31, 2022. NCA should publish results annually starting January 1, 2023.

**Recommendation #4:** That VA modify the following forms to capture race and ethnicity information on applications for NCA: VA Form 21P-530, APR 2017 - Application For Burial Benefits; VA Form 40-1000 - Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility for Burial; VA Form 27-2008, June 2018 - Application For United States Flag For Burial Purposes; and VA Form 21-534EZ - Application For DIC, Survivors, Pension And/or Accrued Benefits. NCA should complete this recommendation by December 31, 2021 with annual reports starting December 31, 2022. NCA should publish results annually starting January 1, 2023.

### **Part III. ACMV 2020 Recommendations, Rationales, and VA Responses**

**Recommendation #1: That VA expand the telehealth capabilities to the Compact of Free Association (COFA) Nations, Palau, the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia by providing: 1) the required bandwidth to allow access virtually as some of the islands do not have fiber optic connections; 2) provide island Veterans with necessary hardware (to include iPads, computers and all accessories) to access telehealth services; 3) assign health care providers to Veterans through telehealth; 4) provide and implement an expedited assessment on the possibility of fielding telehealth soon; 5) provide travel pay to appointments as other Veterans in the U.S. receive this benefit; 6) provide uniform allowance renewal by teleconference; and 7) conduct semi-Annual Town Hall meetings for benefits. The time frame to complete the telehealth system package is 2 years, by the end of December 2022.**

**Rationale:** Telehealth capabilities would greatly assist the Veterans in obtaining benefits and services from VA. We feel with the implementation of telehealth system on the islands, VA will be able to monitor, assist and assess the most needed benefits for the island Veterans.

#### **VA Responses:**

**VHA Response:** Non-Concur

As to expanding the furnishing of VA telehealth services to Veterans in the Freely Associated States and all the related provisions in Recommendation #1, with few stated exceptions, current law prohibits VHA practitioners from providing care, including telehealth services, to Veterans outside of a state. See 38 U.S.C. § 1724, as implemented by 38 C.F.R. § 17.35 and VHA Directive 1601F.05, "Hospital Care and Medical Services in Foreign Countries." Current law provides no exceptions for Veterans located in the Freely Associated States. Thus, inasmuch as this recommendation calls for the provision of telehealth services, a telehealth package, and telehealth equipment, to this Veteran-cohort is not legally feasible.

For Recommendation #1.5, "Travel pay to appointments as other Veterans in the U.S. receive this benefit," VA could provide beneficiary travel outside a state as hospital care and medical services under 38 U.S.C. § 1724, but VA's regulations only authorize beneficiary travel "for travel expenses incurred in the United States." See 38 C.F.R. 70.1(a).

**VBA Response:** Concur-in-Principle – Recommendation #1.7

In reference to semiannual town hall meetings, the Veterans Benefits Administration in collaboration with the Veterans Health Administration and the U.S. Department of State conducted a virtual town hall with the U.S. Ambassador to Palau, select embassy staff and representatives from the U.S. Armed Forces Association of Palau. The town hall was facilitated by the Director of the Manila Regional Office. Presentations and information were provided on VA Solid Start; the foreign benefits program; Telehealth, prescription medications and education programs for Veterans, dependents and survivors; specially adapted housing; general information for Veterans living overseas; and appeals. Additionally, the Director in Manila was actively engaged with the Department of State to hold a virtual town hall with Veterans in the Republic of the Marshall Islands and with State Department officials at the U.S. Embassy in Kolonia, Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia which was held on July 20, 2020.

VBA works in conjunction with VHA to conduct semiannual town halls to provide benefits and eligibility information to these Veterans. The Office of Business Process Integration in coordination with OI&T can support lines of business involved in this effort with development of any business systems plans and/or requirements needed to successfully implement this initiative.

**NCA Response:** NCA does not have any facilities in the Compact of Free Association (COFA) Nations, Palau, the Marshall Islands or the Federated States of Micronesia. However, NCA will partner with VBA or VHA to participate in semi-annual town hall meetings for benefits when they are scheduled.

**OIT Response:** OIT recommends acknowledgement of the scope of influence over performance of telehealth technology sponsored and provided by VA and the limitations that exist with national telecommunications infrastructure in rural areas across the United States. VA OIT will make every effort to support the provision of information technology dependencies at VA clinics, office space and other owned or leased location on the provider side of telehealth services.

**Recommendation #2: That VA track and report on the impact of COVID-19 on minority Veterans. Specifically identify and address racial/ethnic health disparities and will further categorize the impact of COVID-19 on minority Veterans by the era served.**

**Rationale:** Emerging national data, to include VA's own data, indicate that COVID-19 disproportionately affects minority populations. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provide data that indicate this disproportionality of infection and death among racial and ethnic minority populations. The VHA COVID-19 Response Plan, Version 1.6, March 23, 2020, has yet to include data of minority Veterans as being high risk. The categories mentioned are Veterans with chronic and underlying medical conditions; older Veterans, homeless Veterans; and those who may have respiratory issues from potential exposure to chemical or environmental factors (such as burn pits, etc.). This worldwide pandemic is exposing the significant disparities in health among minority populations across the United States. Veterans who have served this great Nation are also impacted and as deaths surpassed 100,000 in late May 2020 across the country, it is imperative that VA accurately track, monitor and report on the impact of COVID-19 on its most vulnerable Veteran populations. This data is necessary to undertake strategic level planning, and make informed and effective responses and strategies to help mitigate the health disparities that COVID-19 has pointedly illuminated and, in some cases, exacerbated.

Suggested Measurable Actions and Metrics:

- Include minority Veteran data in real time, map-based data on COVID-19 cases in the VA COVID-19 National Summary, which is tracked by known cases, convalescent cases and known deaths by state and nationally.
- VHA provide an in-depth report on race and ethnicity of Veterans COVID-19 cases and deaths per state and nationally to the Center for Minority Veterans and the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans on a quarterly basis.
  - Include breakout of Veteran COVID-19 cases and deaths by Veteran era (e.g., Vietnam, Gulf War, etc.).

- Amend the VHA COVID-19 Response Plan, Version 1.6, March 23, 2020, to include reference to minority Veterans having increased risk.
- Develop more intense and deliberate messaging to minority Veteran populations in a culturally sensitive manner regarding the risks of COVID-19 on their health.

**References:**

CDC COVID-19 in Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/racial-ethnic-minorities.html>

VHA COVID-19 Response Plan, Version 1.6, March 23, 2020

[https://www.va.gov/opa/docs/VHA\\_COVID\\_19\\_03232020\\_vF\\_1.pdf](https://www.va.gov/opa/docs/VHA_COVID_19_03232020_vF_1.pdf)

**VA Response:** Concur-in-Principle

VHA currently tracks and reports on the impact of COVID-19 on minority Veterans served by VHA to Veteran Integrated Service Networks (VISN) and VAMCs to help them identify and address racial/ethnic health disparities. We appreciate ACMV’s suggestions that we make this information available to Veterans and other stakeholders. Information that we make available for some groups of Veterans may be limited by small population sizes and privacy constraints. As detailed in the Action Plan, we plan to do the following: add race and ethnicity to the VA COVID-19 National Summary; develop a quarterly report for CMV on race and ethnicity of Veteran COVID-19 cases and deaths with breakdowns by military era; add risk factors as they relate to race and ethnicity in the next version of the COVID-19 Response Plan; develop more intense and deliberate messaging to minority Veteran populations in a culturally sensitive manner regarding the risks of COVID-19 on their health.

<b>VHA Action Plan: Recommendation #2:</b>						
<b>Steps to Implement</b>	<b>Lead Office</b>	<b>Other Offices</b>	<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Current Status as of June 2020</b>	<b>Contact Person</b>
Add race and ethnicity to VA COVID-19 National Summary, by known cases, convalescent cases, and known deaths nationally. (State-level reporting of minority status will not be included for privacy reasons, due to low counts.)	VHA Office of Analytics and Performance Integration (API)	VA OIT Business Intelligence Service Line VHA Office of Health Equity (OHE)	1. Align race and ethnicity categories with VHA OHE reporting. 2. Harmonize data for race and ethnicity into near-real time data feeds. 3. Approvals for public-facing reporting changes from VA and VHA leadership.	Ongoing - Begin FY2021 Q1.	Race and ethnicity data available internally.	Joseph Francis, MD, MPH; Executive Director, VHA API

Develop quarterly report for CMV on race and ethnicity of Veterans COVID-19 cases and deaths with breakdowns by military era.	VHA Office of Health Equity (OHE)	VA Center for Minority Veterans  VA Office of Enterprise Integration	Obtain and analyze data and develop quarterly report.	Ongoing - Begin 2020Q4 and last day of each quarter thereafter.	VISN based reports available on OHE SharePoint.	Ernest Moy, MD, Executive Director, VHA OHE
Add risk factors as they relate to race and ethnicity in the next version of the Response Plan.	OUSH	OEM	The next version of the response plan will language to include reference to minority Veterans having increased risk.	Dec 2020		Christine Bader, PhD, RN, Senior Advisor, Under Secretary for Health
Develop more intense and deliberate messaging to minority Veteran populations in a culturally sensitive manner regarding the risks of COVID-19 on their health.	VHA Office of Health Equity (OHE)	VHA Population Health (10P) VHA Office of Communications (10B2)	Develop and disseminate culturally specific messaging for COVID-19.	Ongoing	General messaging disseminated through OHE newsletter.	Ernest Moy, MD, Executive Director, VHA OHE

**Recommendation #3: That VA require the National Cemetery Administration establish a minimum of four working agreements among institutions that serve the minority Veteran population. NCA should complete this recommendation by December 31, 2021 with annual reports starting December 31, 2022. NCA should publish results annually starting January 1, 2023.**

**Rationale:** The NCA Veterans Legacy Research and Engagement has implemented an interactive web site with public digital engagement for Veteran memorialization. The partnership would establish a minority interactive memorial and increase access focus on the minority Veteran stories. Specifically, we recommend that NCA enhance the Veterans Legacy Program by developing and implementing working group agreements among Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI), Native American Serving Institutions (NASI), Asian American and Pacific Islanders Serving Institutions (AAPISI) and other institutions that have historically served our minority Veterans. The focus of these partnerships is to enhance and expand the capacity to better serve minority Veterans within the Veterans Legacy Program.

**VA Response:** Concur-in-Principle

The mission of the Veterans Legacy Program (VLP) is to memorialize Veterans interred in NCA cemeteries through educational outreach. To that end, VLP has executed its mission successfully, which includes actively producing educational outreach materials that celebrate the service and sacrifice of the fullest diversity of the Veterans community. Examples of this can be found on NCA's

Internet Web site under the History, Education and Legacy TAB. NCA has performed outreach to various institutions that serve the minority Veteran population.

Annually, the NCA VLP posts public solicitations for institutions and non-profit organizations to submit proposals to share our mission via a contract, wholly in accordance with the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR). The FAR specifically prohibits us from targeting specific institutions or vendors for contract award. The Office of Engagement and Memorial Innovation (OEMI) and VLP staff work to build awareness amongst all institutions of higher learning of VLP contract solicitations, including in-person visits to HBCUs such as Howard University. To date, HSIs and AAPISIs have applied (as noted below), but no HBCUs. NCA is not able to control who submits proposals or to target specific groups to respond to a public solicitation. NCA regularly reports to the Advisory Committee on Cemeteries and Memorials (ACCM) on outreach efforts to institutions of higher learning through VLP. NCA further reports to ACCM on outreach efforts to minority and underserved communities.

During FY 2020, VLP has awarded contracts with institutions in the following categories:

- AAPIS: San Francisco State University and University of Hawaii-Manoa.
- HSI: Texas A&M University; University of California-Riverside and San Francisco State University.

While NCA does not currently have any working group agreements with any specific NASIs, NCA is a member of a consortium with the National Museum of the American Indian (Smithsonian) and the National Indian Education Association that is creating educational outreach materials in support of the dedication of the National Native American Veterans Memorial.

All the products created by other institutions that work with VLP have memorialized the service of Veterans from diverse backgrounds. Information on VLP can be found at <https://www.cem.va.gov/legacy/>.

Expanding engagement with minority communities is in the long-term interests of NCA. For example, the Public Affairs and Outreach Team has been collaborating with other program offices in NCA to expand NCA's tribal outreach. NCA regularly participates with other offices in VA (e.g., the Office of Tribal Government Relations, the Center for Minority Veterans and the Office of Rural Health) toward accomplishing this goal.

OEMI's Public Affairs staff regularly publishes social media content telling the story of minority Veterans. All of the social media posts can be found by the public on Facebook and Twitter. Social media content is often pulled from VLP for social media posts or the content is developed by NCA historians working with the public affairs team. (e.g., NCA has profiled the stories on stories associated with Navajo Code Talkers, Buffalo Soldiers and other Veterans).

Last year, NCA released the Veterans Legacy Memorial (VLM), which is an online memorial space. VLM serves as a portal to celebrate and remember those Veterans interred VA's national cemeteries. Recently, NCA enhanced the capability of the VLM platform with the capability of allowing families and friends to leave tributes to Veterans. An example of such tribute can be found at the following link: <https://www.vlm.cem.va.gov/1234/ROBERTEUGENEGARTZKE/011B2A2/>. Since NCA has four working agreements with institutions that serve the minority Veteran population through FY20 and 21, NCA suggests closure of this recommendation.

<b>NCA Action Plan: Recommendation #3:</b>						
<b>Steps to Implement</b>	<b>Lead Office</b>	<b>Other Offices</b>	<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Current Status as of June 2020</b>	<b>Contact Person</b>
Expand partnerships through Legacy Program.	OEMI		Contracts with Hispanic Serving Institutions; Asian American and Pacific Islanders Serving Institutions; Native American Serving Institutions; and Historically Black Colleges.		Completed Six Contracts Awarded for FY 20; Four with minority serving institutions.	Timothy Nosal, Deputy Director, OEMI

**Recommendation #4:** That VA modify the following forms to capture race and ethnicity information on applications for NCA: VA Form 21P-530, APR 2017 - Application For Burial Benefits; VA Form 40-1000 - Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility for Burial; VA Form 27-2008, June 2018 - Application For United States Flag For Burial Purposes; and VA Form 21-534EZ - Application For DIC, Survivors, Pension And/or Accrued Benefits. NCA should complete this recommendation by December 31, 2021 with annual reports starting December 31, 2022. NCA should publish results annually starting January 1, 2023.

**Rationale:** We understand that NCA is in the process of updating forms to facilitate Veterans' access to NCA services and to more accurately account for Veterans' race and ethnicity.

**VA Responses:**

**NCA Response:** NCA has modified VA Form 40-10007, Pre-Need Determination for Burial to capture race and ethnicity information. We provide a link to the updated form that is publicly available on the following VA.gov website: <https://www.va.gov/find-forms/?q=pre-need>. No Action Plan is needed for this completed item.

NCA does not manage the three other forms noted in Recommendation #4. As such, we defer to VBA to address form updates or to provide an Action Plan for the following: VA Form 21P-530, APR 2017 - Application for Burial Benefits; VA Form 27-2008, June 2018 - Application For United States Flag For Burial Purposes; and VA Form 21-534EZ - Application For DIC, Survivors, Pension And/or Accrued Benefits.

**NCA Action Plan:  
Recommendation #4:**

Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status as of June 2020	Contact Person
VA Form 40-10007.	NCA Field Programs		NCA modified VA Form 40-10007 to include race and ethnicity questions. The form is available on the NCA intranet and public-facing VA website.		Completed.	Jay Dalrymple Director National Cemetery Scheduling Office

**VBA Response: Non-Concur**

The potential risk in VA collecting this data is not outweighed by the overall benefits of the data collection. More specifically, VBA is concerned that capturing race and ethnicity data may result in an increase of an incorrect use of this data by Veterans as a rationale for appealing or disputing a less-than-favorable disability rating. As such, the collection of this data would be best performed in a manner that is distinctly separate from the development and adjudication of Veteran and beneficiaries' claims for benefits.

**Part IV. Agenda – 2018 Washington, D.C. Departmental Briefings**

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

December 11 - 13, 2018  
VA Central Office  
810 Vermont Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20420

**AGENDA**

**Tuesday – December 11, 2018 (VACO Room 230)**

8:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.	Opening Remarks & Review Agenda	Mr. Stephen Dillard, DFO Ms. Ginger Miller, Chairwoman
9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	Dep. SECVA Remarks/Photo OP	The Honorable James Byrne
10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	VA Advisory Committee Management	Mr. Jeffrey Moragne Director, ACOMO
10:30 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.	Break	
10:45 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.	VA Ethics Briefing	Ms. Carol Borden, Staff Attorney, Deputy Ethics Official
11:15 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.	Center for Minority Veterans	Mr. Dennis May, Deputy Director
11:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.	Lunch on your own	
12:45 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.	National Cemetery Administration	Ms. Kimberly Wright Executive Director of Field Programs

**Topics:**

- Provide an update on the Native American Cemetery Grant Program.
- Provide an update on Outreach Activities targeting minority Veterans.
- Provide an update on NCA's Action Plan, Recommendation #1, pg. 12, 2017 ACMV Annual Report.

1:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. Administrative Time

**Topics:**

- Provide the Strategies and statistics on suicide prevention.
- Provide a brief on the Tool Kit.
- Provide a brief and update on the Call Centers/Crisis Line.

2:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.      Veterans Experience Office      Dr. Lynda Davis  
Chief Veteran Experience Officer

**Topics:**

- Roles & Responsibilities of VEO.
- Brief on the Veterans' Family, Caregiver, and Survivor Advisory Committee.
- Customer Satisfaction Surveys – minority Veterans.

2:30 p.m. - 2:45 p.m.      BREAK

2:45 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.      Veterans Benefits Administration      Ms. Charmain Bogue, Deputy  
Director for Operations  
Mr. David McLenachen, Director  
Appeals Management Office

**Topics:**

- Update on Modernization Efforts.
- Update on the Native American Direct Home Loan Program.
- Update on Outreach Activities to Minority Veterans.
- Provide an update on the Annual Benefits Report by State.
- Brief and provide an update on the PTSD Grant Rate Analysis Report.
- Provide an update on VBA's Action Plan, Recommendation #1, pg. 10, 2017 ACMV Annual Report.
- Provide an update on VBA's Action Plan, Recommendation #4, pg. 20, 2017 ACMV Annual Report.

3:45 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.      Committee After Action Review &      Ms. Ginger Miller, Chairwoman  
Sub-Committee Notes

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 11 – 13, 2018

VA Central Office

810 Vermont Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20420

**AGENDA**

**Wednesday – December 12, 2018 (VACO Room 230)**

8:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.            Opening & Review Agenda            Ms. Ginger Miller, Chairwoman

8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.            Board of Veterans Appeals            Ms. Cheryl Mason  
Chairman, Board of  
Veterans Appeals

**Topics:**

- Provide the status of the Veterans Appeals Improvement & Modernization Act of 2017.

09:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.            Office of Health Equity            Dr. Ernest H. Moy  
Executive Director

**Topics:**

- Provide introductions of new office staff.
- Provide informational OHE's Mission Act.
- Provide an update on the Electronic Health Record.
- Provide a brief on the Patient Advocate Office.

10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.            Community Care            Ms. Kristin Cunningham,  
Executive Officer, Community  
Care

**Topics:**

- Provide a brief and update.

10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.            Mental Health            Dr. David Carroll, Executive  
Director, Office of Mental  
Health & Suicide Prevention  
Dr. Keita Franklin, National  
Director, Suicide Prevention

**Topics:**

- Provide an update on mental health Initiatives.
- Provide a brief on Staffing and Recruitment.
- Provide a brief on any trends noted when treating minority Veterans.

11:00 a.m. - 11:15 p.m.            Break

11:15 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Veterans Health Administration

Larry Connell, Chief of Staff,  
Veterans Health Administration

**Topics:**

- Provide an update on the Modernization efforts.
- Review of current VHA initiatives that focus on access.
- Review of the VA Dental Program.

12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. Lunch on Your Own

1:00 p.m. - 1:45 p.m. Office of Telehealth  
Office of Policy & Planning

Mr. John Peters, Deputy Director,  
Telehealth Services  
Mr. Terrence Stinson, Director,  
Policy Analysis

**Topics:**

- Provide an update on current Legislation.
- Provide an update on Telehealth/Telemedicine.

1:45 p.m. - 2:15 p.m. Million Veteran Program

Dr. Jennifer Moser  
MVP Program/Office of Research  
and Development

**Topics:**

- Provide an overview and goal of the program.
- Provide an update on the data collection results.

2:15 p.m. - 2:45 p.m. Women's Health Services

Dr. Patricia Hayes, Chief  
Consultant Women's Health  
Services

**Topics:**

- Provide an overview on minority women's health and initiatives.

2:45 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. Break

3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Sub-Committee Discussions

Ms. Ginger Miller, Chairwoman

4:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. Wrap Up

4:30 p.m. Adjourn

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

December 11 – 13, 2018  
VA Central Office  
810 Vermont Ave., NW, Washington, D.C.

**AGENDA**

**Thursday – December 13, 2018 (VACO Room 230)**

8:00 a.m. - 8:15 a.m.	Opening and Agenda	Ms. Ginger Miller, Chairwoman
8:15 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.	Office of Diversity & Inclusion	Mr. Harvey Johnson, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Resolution Management Ms. Ryan Pugh, Management Analyst, ORM

**Topics:**

- Provide a review of minorities in Senior Grades.
- Provide VA Employee Demographics.
- Applicant Flow Analysis.

9:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.	Leadership Development Programs	Ms. Rhonda Carter Director, Talent Planning and Assessment
-----------------------	---------------------------------	--

**Topic:**

- Provide an overview of Leadership Development Programs.

9:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	Ex-Officious Update	HHS – Dr. Alexis Bakos DOD – Mr. Brett Stevens
------------------------	---------------------	---

**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	Ms. Ginger Miller, Chairwoman
12:00 p.m. - 12:45 p.m.	Committee After Action Report	Ms. Ginger Miller, Chairwoman
12:45 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Wrap Up	
1:00 p.m.	Adjourn	

**Part V. Agenda – Houston Site Visit**

**Department of Veterans Affairs  
Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans  
Houston, Texas Site Visit 2019**

**AGENDA**

**Monday, April 8, 2019**

**Travel Day**

**Tuesday, April 9, 2019**

7:30 a.m.	Assemble in Hotel Lobby/Await Transportation Marriott Medical Center 6580 Fannin St., Houston, TX 77030	
8:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.	Travel to Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center 2002 Holcombe Blvd., Houston, TX 77030	
8:30 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.	Meet/Greet Houston VAMC Staff	VAMC Lobby
8:45 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.	Opening remarks, Admin. & Prepare for Houston VAMC Briefing	Stephen Dillard, DFO Ginger Miller, Chairwoman
9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	Houston VAMC Briefing Executive Suite (Room 4A-200)	James Scheurich, MD, Dep COS Barbara Sapp-Davis, MVPC
	<b><u>Topics:</u></b> Suicide Prevention Outreach to Minority Veterans (MVPC) Women & Homeless Veterans Leadership Training Programs Mission Act/Rural Health Initiatives	
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	VAMC Tour ( <b>Tour closed to the Public</b> )	
12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.	Lunch in Houston VAMC Canteen (on your own) - Tentative	
1:30 p.m. - 1:45 p.m.	Board Bus/Depart for Houston Regional Office 6900 Almeda Road, Houston, TX 77030	
1:45 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.	Meet/Greet Houston RO Staff	Building Lobby
2:00 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.	Opening remarks, Admin. & Prepare for Houston Regional Office Briefing Veterans Conference Center	Stephen Dillard, DFO Ginger Miller, Chairwoman
2:15 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.	Houston Regional Office Briefing Veterans Conference Center 6900 Almeda Road, Houston, TX 77030	Robert Worley II, Executive Director Edward Perry, MVPC

**Topics:**

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

3:45 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.      Tour of Houston Regional Office (**Tour Closed to the Public**)  
4:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.      Assemble/Board Bus for Hotel (Marriott Medical Center)

**Wednesday, April 10, 2019**

7:30 a.m. – 7:45 a.m.      Assemble in Hotel Lobby/Board Bus  
Marriott Medical Center  
6580 Fannin St., Houston, TX 77030

7:45 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.      Travel to Houston National Cemetery  
Admin Bldg. – Conference Room  
10410 Veterans Memorial Drive, Houston, TX 77038

8:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.      Meet/Greet NCA Staff  
Admin Bldg. – Conference Room

9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.      Houston National Cemetery                      Celethia Reed, Assistant Director  
Briefing/Tour    Deon Bates, MVPC

11:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.      Assemble/Board Bus to Local Restaurant (Houston, Texas)

11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.      Lunch (Place TBD)

1:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.      Assemble/Board Bus for Town Hall Meeting

1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.      Depart for Town Hall Meeting  
United Way of Greater Houston  
Community Resource Center  
50 Waugh Drive, Houston, Texas 77007

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

4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.      Town Hall Meeting                                      Stephen Dillard, DFO  
United Way of Greater Houston                      Ginger Miller, Chairwoman  
Community Resource Center  
50 Waugh Drive, Houston, Texas 77007

6:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.      Assemble/Board Bus for Hotel

7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.      Return to Hotel (Marriott Medical Center)

**Thursday, April 11, 2019**

7:30 a.m. – 7:45 a.m.	Assemble in Hotel Lobby/Await Transportation Marriott Medical Center 6580 Fannin St., Houston, TX 77030	
7:45 a.m. - 8:15 a.m.	Travel to Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center Room 4C-122 2002 Holcombe Blvd., Houston, TX 77030	
8:15 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.	Meet/Greet Houston VAMC Staff	VAMC Lobby
8:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	Committee after Action Review & Sub-committee Notes <b>Prepare for Exit Briefing/Room 4C-122</b>	Stephen Dillard, DFO Ginger Miller, Chairwoman
10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	Public Comments	
10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Conduct <b>Exit Briefing</b> VBA Leadership – Mr. Robert Worley II, Executive Director VHA Leadership – Mr. James Scheurich, MD, Deputy Chief of Staff NCA Leadership – Mr. Roy Luera, Director	
12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch in Houston VAMC Canteen (on your own)	
1:00 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.	Work on ACMV 2020 Report (1st Draft)	Ginger Miller, Chairwoman
3:45 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Administrative Paperwork	
4:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.	Adjourn Meeting	
4:15 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.	Assemble in Lobby/Await Transportation	
4:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.	Return to Hotel (Marriott Medical Center)	

**Friday, April 12, 2019**

**Travel Day**

## **Part VI. Town Hall Meeting – Houston, Texas**

ACMV hosted a Veterans town hall meeting at the United Way of Greater Houston Community Resource Center. The meeting provided Veterans a forum to share issues of concern and to obtain answers to questions from ACMV members related to VA benefits and services. There were approximately 100 attendees. Local VA officials from the Michael E. DeBakey VAMC Houston Regional Office and the Houston National Cemetery served as panel members during the meeting. Numerous questions were raised regarding the following issues: the difficulties of getting appointments and the long wait times for appointments; the need for peer support groups for both the Veterans and families; and the Veterans expressed the need for VA Representatives from VHA, VBA and NCA do more outreach and widely publicize their outreach events. During the town hall, the ACMV heard from Veterans who had great experiences with VA.

**Part VII. Exit Briefing with Houston Regional Office, Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center (VAMC) and Houston National Cemetery**

James Hedge, Assistant Director, Houston Regional Office:

- Minority Owned Businesses – no Procurement processes in place.
- Provided the processes of on-site Claims Clinics which have been very successful.
- The Regional Office is surveying their customers and negative feedback is not showing up in their feedback, but they will share the townhall feedback in the regional office.

Dr. Jagadeesh Kalavar, Acting Director, Michael E. DeBakey VAMC:

- Minority contract companies are given priority – need a leaner contracting process because you are competing with the private sector.
- Have an active Peer Support Therapy Group.
- The Committee recommended that VAMC offer the Veterans a Peer Support Group more on a social level, so the Veterans can talk to each other than in a therapy session.
- Conduct monthly townhall meetings and attend additional townhall meetings with other organizations monthly.

Celethia Reed, Assistant Director, Houston National Cemetery:

- There are over 77, 000 Veterans interred in the Houston National Cemetery.
- Inter 3500 to 3600 per year.
  - This Cemetery is the third busiest cemetery in Texas.
- Do not breakdown the data by minority groups.
- Houston is a pilot program for the same day Presidential Memorial Certificate.
- Partner with schools on Flag Day, Memorial Day, etc., to keep children engaged.

**Part VIII. Agenda – 2019 Washington, D.C. Departmental Briefings**

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

December 3 - 5, 2019  
VA Central Office  
810 Vermont Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20420

**AGENDA**

**Tuesday – December 3, 2019 (VACO Room 230)**

8:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.	Opening Remarks & Review Agenda	Mr. Stephen B. Dillard, DFO Ms. Ginger Miller, Chairwoman
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.	Transition and Economic Development	Ms. Cheryl Rawls Executive Director Office of Transition and Economic Development

**Topics:**

- Roles and Responsibilities of TED.

9:15 a.m. - 9:45 a.m.	Center for Minority Veterans	Mr. Dennis May Deputy Director
9:45 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	Break	
10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	VA Remarks/Photo Op	Mr. Christopher Syrek, Deputy Chief of Staff Veterans Affairs
11:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.	National Cemetery Administration	Mr. Tom Howard, Chief of Staff

**Topics:**

- Native American Cemetery Grant Program Review.
- Update on Outreach Activities.
- Update on state/territory flag installations.

11:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Veterans Experience Office	Dr. Lynda Davis Chief Veteran Experience Officer
-------------------------	----------------------------	---

**Topics:**

- Roles & Responsibilities of VEO.
- Brief on the Veterans' Family, Caregiver, and Survivor Advisory Committee.
- Customer Satisfaction Surveys – minority Veterans.

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

Lunch on Your Own

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

National Center for Veterans Analysis  
and Statistics

Ms. Melissa Chiu  
Director, Statistics and  
Analytics Service  
Ms. Tamara Denise Lee  
Statistician

**Topics:**

- Update on Recommendation #1, 2015 ACMV Report, of a report on selected VA benefits and services utilization by minority Veterans.
- Provide an update on latest Minority Veterans Report.

1:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Office of Tribal Government Relations

Ms. Stephanie Birdwell  
Director, Office of Tribal Government  
Relations

**Topics:**

- Update on OTGR's Outreach Activities.
- Update on OTGR's Government to Government Consultation Initiatives.

2:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Million Veteran Program

Dr. Jennifer Moser  
Program Manager, Genomics

**Topics:**

- Provide an overview and goal of the program.
- Provide an update on the data collection results.

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

BREAK

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

Veterans Benefits Administration

Mr. Willie Clark, Deputy Under  
Secretary for Field Operations  
Mr. Jeffrey London, Executive  
Director, Loan Guaranty Service

**Topics:**

- Update on Transformation Initiatives.
- Review the Native American Direct Home Loan Program.
- Update on Outreach Activities to Minority Veterans.
- Provide an update on the Annual Benefits Report by State.

3:45 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.

Committee After Action Review &  
Sub-Committee Notes

Ms. Ginger Miller, Chairwoman

4:45 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Wrap Up/Adjourn

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

December 3 – 5, 2019  
VA Central Office  
810 Vermont Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20420

**AGENDA**

**Wednesday – December 4, 2019 (VACO Room 230)**

8:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.	Opening & Review Agenda	Ms. Ginger Miller, Chairwoman
8:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.	Board of Veterans Appeals	Ms. Cheryl Mason, Chairman Board of Veterans Appeals

**Topics:**

- Provide the status of the Veterans Appeals Improvement & Modernization Act of 2017.

9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	Veterans Health Administration	Mr. Lawrence Connell Chief of Staff
------------------------	--------------------------------	--

**Topics:**

- Update on Transformation Initiatives.
- Update on the Choice Program.
- Review of current VHA initiatives that focus on access.
- Review of the VA Dental Program.
- Update on Suicide Prevention.

10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	Center for Women Veterans	Ms. Jacquelyn Hayes-Byrd Executive Director
10:30 p.m. - 11:00 a.m.	Women's Health Services	Dr. Nancy Maher Program Analyst, Women's Services

**Topics:**

- Provide an overview on minority women's health.

11:00 a.m. - 11:15 p.m.	Break	
11:15 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	Mental Health	Dr. Christopher Loftis, National Mental Health Director VA/DOD

**Topics:**

- Provide an update on mental health initiatives.
- Provide a brief on staffing & recruitment.
- Provide a brief on any trends noted when treating minority Veterans.

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

Lunch on Your Own

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

Office of Telehealth

Mr. John Peters, Deputy  
Director, Telehealth Services

**Topics:**

- Provide an update on current legislation.
- Provide an update on Telehealth/Telemedicine.

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

Office of Rural Health

Dr. Thomas Klobucar  
Executive Director

**Topics:**

- Provide an update on access to insular areas.
- Provide an update on outreach efforts in tribal areas.

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

Office of Health Equity

Dr. Ernest H. Moy  
Executive Director

**Topics:**

- Provide introductions of new office staff.
- Provide informational OHE's Mission Act.
- Provide an update on the Electronic Health Record.
- Provide a brief on the Patient Advocate Office.

2:45 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Break

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

Sub-Committee Discussions

Ms. Ginger Miller, Chairwoman

4:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Wrap Up

4:30 p.m.

Adjourn

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

December 3 – 5, 2019  
VA Central Office  
810 Vermont Ave., NW, Washington, D.C.

## **AGENDA**

### **Thursday – December 5, 2019 (VACO Room 230)**

8:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.	Opening and Agenda	Ms. Ginger Miller, Chairwoman
8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.	Office of Diversity & Inclusion	Ms. Ryan Pugh, Management Analyst, HRA

**Topics:**

- Provide a review of minorities in Senior Grades.
- Provide VA Employee Demographics.
- Applicant Flow Analysis.

9:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	Ex-Officio Update	HHS – Capt. Samuel Wu Office of Minority Health
------------------------	-------------------	--

**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 – Mr. Lawrence Connell VBA – Mr. Willie Clark NCA – Mr. Tom Howard
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	Lunch	
12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.	CMV's 25 <sup>th</sup> Commemoration	
1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.	Committee After Action Report <b>(Room 530)</b>	Ms. Ginger Miller, Chairwoman
4:30 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.	Wrap Up/Adjourn	

**APPENDIX A: Action Plans Follow Up**

**Roll Up of Open ACMV Reports Action Plans 2017 and 2018 Update Spreadsheets**

2018 Action Plan Update Spreadsheet  
ACMV 2018 Report Action Plan

2018 Action Plan Update Spreadsheet

Report Year	Recommendations	Program Office	Page	Current Status as of June 1, 2020	Projected Completion Date (Date/NA)
2018	Recommendation #2	VBA		Ongoing	
2018	Recommendation #3	OHE		Ongoing	
2018	Recommendation #4	VBA		Closed	RAMP ended 2/14/2019

\*See Updated Action Plans

**Recommendation #2:** That the Department of Veterans Affairs require the Veterans Benefits Administration to collaborate with the National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics to publish disability award reports bi-annually to identify and address potential racial/ethnic award disparities by the end of FY 2019.

<b>VBA Action Plan:</b>						
<b>Recommendation #2:</b>						
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status as of June 2020	Contact Person
Improve the completeness of race/ethnicity data.	20B		Explore additional sources of race/ethnicity data to fill in gaps, such as a USVETS update.	Complete and ongoing.	VBA received an update in 2020 to USVETS with 2018 information that improved the overall quality of data.	Mark Seastrom, Director, 20B

**Recommendation #3:** That the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration, follows through on its commitment to provide the VHA Office of Health Equity (OHE) necessary

personnel resources by the end of FY 2019, to facilitate implementation of the VA Health Equity Action Plan.

<b>VHA Action Plan: Office of Health Equity Recommendation #3:</b>						
<b>Steps to Implement</b>	<b>Lead Office</b>	<b>Other Offices</b>	<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Current Status as of July 2020</b>	<b>Contact Person</b>
Recruit to full OHE complement of 6 FTEs	OHE		Recruit Executive Director	Complete	Applicant selected (began work July 2018).	Ernest Moy Executive Director, OHE
			Recruit GS-14 Health Systems Specialist	Complete	Position filled Aug 2018.	
			Recruit for remaining 3 FTE vacancies	Ongoing *Funding for two positions reduced	OHE planning recruitment strategy with 5 of 6 positions filled; additional support has been provided by interns and fellows.	

**Recommendation #4:** That the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, develop a comprehensive communication plan to encourage minority Veteran participation in the Rapid Appeals Management Process (RAMP) by 2nd Qtr., 2019.

**VA Response:** Concur-in-Principle

The Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP) was a voluntary option for eligible Veterans to participate in the new decision review process established by the *Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017* (AMA) that took effect on February 19, 2019. It provided eligible Veterans with early resolutions to their currently appealed claims.

Throughout the lifecycle of RAMP, the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) ensured Veterans were aware of the opportunity through various forms of robust communication. VA distributed a suite of Veteran-centric engagement and communication materials to inform Veterans, their families, Veterans Service Organizations (VSO), and other stakeholders, of the benefits of RAMP. VBA created a YouTube video, and hosted a Facebook Live event for all 540,000 followers, responding directly to questions, and distributed an informational RAMP video link through social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter). Additionally, VBA worked extensively with accredited representatives and other stakeholders to provide information on RAMP and Appeals Modernization at various outreach events. VBA supported several VSO presentations, to include the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers, bi-annual VSO/Military Service Organization summit, biweekly national VSO meetings, VSO Communication Directors, as well as various VSO conferences. VBA conducted Town Halls at various Regional Offices, hosted congressional presentations, and provided scripts for National Call Center employees.

VBA discontinued RAMP on February 14, 2019, with full implementation of the AMA. AMA offers Veterans a greater choice in how VA reviews their claim. As of February 19, 2019, Veterans who disagree with a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) decision have three decision review choices: Higher-Level Review, Supplemental Claim, and an appeal to the Board of Veterans' Appeals. To increase awareness of AMA, VBA continues to maintain and expand its presence on social media and blog sites delivering AMA related messaging. VBA has updated internal websites to deliver information regarding AMA and provide detailed information regarding the decision review process. Additionally, VBA is also delivering its messaging through other media outlets with public service announcements (PSA). VBA sought diversity and inclusion when casting Veterans for the AMA PSA. VBA continues to work closely with Congressional stakeholders, Veterans Service Organizations, private attorneys, VA Regional Benefits Office outreach personnel, VBA National Call Center personnel, and influencer groups to communicate AMA criteria and eligibility requirements to Veterans.

2017 Action Plan Update Spreadsheet  
ACMV 2017 Report Action Plan

Report Year	Recommendations	Program Office	Page	Current Status as of 1 June 2020	Projected Completion Date (Date/NA)
2017	Recommendation #1	VHA/OHE		In Progress	
2017	Recommendation #1	NCA		Completed	October 2017
2017	Recommendation #1	OEI		In Progress	
2017	Recommendation #4	VBA		In Progress	
2017	Recommendation #4	VHA/OHE		In Progress	
2017	Recommendation #4	OPIA		In Progress	

**\*See Updated Action Plans**

**Recommendation #1:** That the Department of Veterans Affairs collect and analyze race and ethnicity data across all business lines to identify, monitor, and address potential disparities that effect minority Veterans by the start of FY 2018.

<b>VHA Action Plan: Office of Health Equity</b>						
<b>Recommendation #1:</b> That the Department of Veterans Affairs collect and analyze race and ethnicity data across all business lines to identify, monitor, and address potential disparities that effect minority Veterans by the start of FY 2018.						
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status as of June 2020	Contact Person
<p>Establish mechanisms to ensure that the collection of race and ethnicity data is standardized and collected in accordance with OMB standards.</p> <p>Evaluate the requirement to include collection of race/ethnicity data for all products.</p>	Office of Enterprise Integration	All VHA program offices that collect and/or report data.	<p>Conduct an organizational assessment to determine current methods used by VHA program offices to collect and report racial/ethnic data.</p> <p>Based on the outcome of the organizational assessment, implement OMB criteria or establish VA/VHA processes as needed.</p> <p>Identify VA and VHA Leadership need to successfully implement the efforts.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Anticipated full implementation of initial actions dependent upon the completion of the Modernization effort.</p>	<p>As VHA implements its Modernization Strategy. VHA leadership and the Modernization Team are looking at functions across the Office of Health Equity and the entirety of VHA to determine best organizational fit and suitability for all health care functions. This includes the standardization of data collection, as</p>	<p>A key leader will be identified at the VHA level upon the completion of the Modernization Effort.</p> <p><b>Office of Health Equity is leading this effort until otherwise determined.</b></p>

			<p>Collecting the data that would identify potential disparities remains a key priority for VHA. Specific Program Offices need to analyze the collected data to determine which specific health issues have the greatest impact on the care of minority Veterans.</p> <p>Linkage to the SECVA top five priorities is paramount.</p>		<p>well as the development of corresponding products and processes as needed.</p> <p><b>In response to GAO report, “VA HEALTH CARE: Opportunities Exist for VA to Better Identify and Address Racial and Ethnic Disparities (GAO 20-83),” OHE is assessing the accuracy and completeness of VA race/ethnicity data to be completed NLT FY2021.</b></p>	
--	--	--	---	--	--	--

<b>NCA Action Plan:</b>						
<b>Recommendation #1:</b>						
<b>Steps to Implement</b>	<b>Lead Office</b>	<b>Other Offices</b>	<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Current Status as of June 2020</b>	<b>Contact Person</b>
1. Revise application forms under NCA governance.	MPS.	OMB.	1. All NCA governance forms have already been updated.	October 1, 2017.	Completed.	VBA for the remainder of the forms under their governance.
2. NCA operating systems.	MPS		2. All NCA IT systems updated to collect race and ethnicity.	June 2017	Completed.	

## OEI Action Plan:

### Recommendation #1:

Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status	Contact Person
Share draft report with Center for Minority Veterans.	OEI		Share draft report to ensure that it meets needs and responds to recommendations as appropriate.	9/3/20	Submitted to the Center on 9/3/20	Tamara Lee
Receive comments from Center for Minority Veterans and other internal stakeholders.	OEI	CMV	Receive and reconcile any comments.	10/15/20	TBD	Tamara Lee
Finalize and publish report.	OEI	CMV	Finalize the report through the approval process and publish to the public.	11/1/20	TBD	Tamara Lee

**Recommendation #4:** That the Department of Veterans Affairs ensure that the Spanish language versions of the instructions for applications for VA benefits and services are readily available, especially in areas of the country with high Latino/Hispanic populations, to assist Veterans and their family members seeking VA benefits and services.

### VHA Action Plan: Office of Health Equity

**Recommendation #4:** That the Department of Veterans Affairs ensure that the Spanish language versions of the instructions for applications for VA benefits and services are readily available, especially in areas of the country with high Latino/Hispanic populations, to assist Veterans and their family members seeking VA benefits and services.

Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status as of June 2020	Contact Person
<p>Assess existing resources for ESL Veterans and their families across VHA.</p> <p>Develop plan to remediate existing gaps. Ensure quality of existing materials.</p> <p>Develop new resources</p>	<p>Office of Policy and Services (10P).</p> <p>Recommend that this particular task be managed at the VA level, as it crosses all administrations to ensure consistency across the Agency.</p>	<p>All VHA program offices that collect and/or report data.</p>	<p>Identify stakeholders (i.e. Veterans Health Library, Connected Care, Community Care, Policy and Planning, Advocacy, et. al) for collaboration internally and externally.</p> <p>Engage Vets.Gov and the VSOs.</p>	<p>To be established by identified lead office.</p>	<p><b>This area needs continued enhancement.</b></p> <p><b>There were initial conversations with the Health Equity Advisory Coalition; however, it was determined that this is not a Health</b></p>	<p>Suggest a conversation at the USH/PDUSH and DUSH levels to determine an appropriate office to lead the VHA portion of a combined response.</p> <p>The Office of Population Health might be considered as a strong candidate to fill this role.</p>

based on identified gaps.	There will be a need for Senior representation for each administration to ensure ongoing emphasis on its importance.		Survey existing materials both print and electronic, to identify current resources and perform a concurrent gap analysis.		<b>Equity issue in its entirety.</b>	<b>Designation of appropriate office to lead this effort is on-going.</b>
---------------------------	--	--	---	--	--------------------------------------	---

**VBA Response:** Concur

Recently, within the last 60 days, the Benefits Assistance Service (BAS) conducted US Census data research related to areas of the country with high Hispanic populations. The research showed the VA regional offices (VAROs) with jurisdiction over those “high” Hispanic population areas were the Waco and Houston ROs, the San Diego, Oakland, and San Francisco ROs, the New York RO, the Chicago RO, and the Phoenix RO. (Please note the San Juan VARO website is already translated into Spanish <http://www.benefits.va.gov/sanjuansp/index-sp.asp>). In addition to researching Census data, BAS also reviewed the Annual Benefits Report (ABR) to research and consider benefit recipients’ demographic information. Now that this research is complete, the next step is to submit the data from the VAROs within the high Hispanic population areas for translations. BAS will be turning over the web content of these VAROs to translators within the next 30 days as part of its Translation Services contract. It is expected that the translated web pages will be built by the end of this fiscal year. Additionally, BAS is in the planning stages of translating the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Participant User Guides. The TAP program is currently undergoing a redesign, which will be completed in 2018. Upon completion of this redesign, the Participant User Guide will also be translated. Finally, as indicated below, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Federal Benefits for Veterans, Dependents and Survivors publication is prepared each year and has not been translated into Spanish since 2013. The following link directs you to the latest Spanish language version: [https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits\\_book/2013\\_Federal\\_Benefits\\_for\\_Veterans\\_Spanish.pdf](https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book/2013_Federal_Benefits_for_Veterans_Spanish.pdf). BAS will begin working with OPIA to translate this online version of the Federal Benefits Booklet and will work to have it translated into Spanish in 2018.

**Update July 2020:** VBA has made efforts to ensure Spanish language materials are available to Veterans and their beneficiaries. VBA created Spanish versions to the regional office home webpages for Los Angeles, Oakland, Houston, Waco and created a Spanish language resource webpage. Additionally, VBA has online factsheets, pamphlets and brochures. VA’s Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs is currently working with VBA’s Office of Strategic Engagement to have the online version of the 2020 Federal Benefits Booklets translated into Spanish.

Important Note: In the response for Recommendation #4, VBA has a correction that should be included in the update. VBA does not have a regional office in San Francisco, so it should be omitted from the report.

In the 2017 report, there was a recommendation to update TAP to accommodate Spanish speaking participants by providing a Spanish version of the VA Benefits and Services participant guide. This recommendation has been completed and the first Spanish version of the VA Benefits and Services participant guide was published in January 2018.

In reference to the websites, as of the beginning of FY18, VA began migrating benefits contents from benefits.va.gov websites to VA.gov, using a new content management system. With these changes, OSE began working with VA with the possibility of translating these contents into Spanish (by March of 2019). Some efforts have been initiated and conducted, to include user interface testing, researching for the most suitable translation platform or methods, research of ideas from other government agencies' translated contents, user testing with Veterans and their family members, and determining the feasibility of contractual elements (budget).

The translation project had been put on hold due to lack of funding, VA.gov contracting changeover and constraints, and more recently, refocusing of efforts in implementing COVID-19 web resources. Additionally, RO websites (listed in the table below) are now available in Spanish. Additional pages are being completed as resources allow.

### **Fact Sheets**

In addition, 60% of benefits fact sheets have been translated into Spanish. These were the most used fact sheets and were deemed suitable for translation.

### **VA Federal Benefits Booklet for Veterans, Dependents, and Survivors**

The 2020 edition of the booklet is 76 pages long, including the front and back covers. It has been assigned to a contractor and is pending review of the proof. After approval, it will be ready to print (both physical and electronic forms). The electronic version of the booklet will then be translated into Spanish. The translation process and web updates will take approximately 3-4 weeks.

### **VA Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Benefits and Services Participant Guides**

TAP Participant Guides have been translated into Spanish, in December of 2017. New versions of the Guide will continue to be translated into Spanish.

**VBA Action Plan:  
Recommendation #4:**

<b>Steps to Implement</b>	<b>Lead Office</b>	<b>Other Offices</b>	<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Current Status as of June 2020</b>	<b>Contact Person</b>
Translate benefits “hubs” content on <b>VA.gov</b> web pages to Spanish.	OSE	DEPO (VA OIT) VHA NCA	VBA Office of Strategic Engagement (OSE) is awaiting on VA OIT’s Digital Experience Program Office (DEPO) to complete website migration to VA.gov in order to begin translation.	Ongoing	Pending.  This project is pending due to DEPO contracting constraints. DEPO manages the content migration and engineering workload for VA.gov website migration.	Sandy Tadeo, Chief of OSE Digital Strategy and Design (Acting) Jennifer Lee, DEPO
Translate <b>benefits.va.gov</b> web pages to Spanish.	OSE		Translate websites into Spanish and develop (code) web pages to accommodate new content.	Ongoing	In Progress. RO websites (listed below) are now available in Spanish. Additional pages are being completed as resources allow. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Houston</li> <li>• Waco</li> <li>• Oakland</li> <li>• Los Angeles</li> <li>• San Juan</li> <li>• Manila (Tagalog)</li> </ul>	Sandy Tadeo, Chief of OSE Digital Strategy and Design (Acting)
Update the VA <b>Federal Benefits Booklet</b> for Veterans, Dependents, and Survivors	OPIA	OSE	VA’s Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs (OPIA) is currently working with VBA’s Office of Strategic Engagement to have the online version of the 2020 Federal Benefits Booklets translated into Spanish.	Pending	In progress. Awaiting completion of <a href="#">FY20 Federal Benefits booklet</a> completion from OPIA.	Jeanette Mendy, Deputy Director National Veterans Outreach Office  Sandy Tadeo, Chief of OSE Digital Strategy and Design (Acting)
Update the TAP program to accommodate Spanish	OTED	OSE	Complete redesign of TAP program; assign Participant User Guide to Translation Services.	Completed	Completed. TAP materials (Participant Guides) were completed in	Cheryl Samples Chief, TAP Curriculum and Training

speaking participants.					December of 2017. <a href="#">TAP Participants Guides</a> have been translated into Spanish. New versions of the Guide will continue to be translated into Spanish.	Transition and Economic Development  Sandy Tadeo, Chief of OSE Digital Strategy and Design (Acting)
Translate web pages to Spanish.  Update the TAP program to accommodate Spanish speaking participants.  Update the VA Federal Benefit Booklet for Veterans, Dependents, and Survivors.	OSE	OPIA	Provide webpage access to Translation Services contractors.  Complete redesign of TAP program; assign Participant User Guide to Translation Services.  OSE will work with OPIA to update the Spanish version of the Federal Benefit Booklet.	EOFY2017.  Complete  In Progress	In Process.	Robert (Mike) Carr, Executive Director, Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement (OSE)

Benefits Facts Link:

[https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits\\_book.asp](https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book.asp)

Benefits Book Link

<https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/about/promotional>

eBenefits Publications

## **APPENDIX B: Advisory Committee Biographies**

### **Nestor A. Aliga, Colonel, USAR (Retired) Asian American**

Nestor Aliga enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps and retired from U. S. Army Reserve at the rank of Colonel (O-6) after thirty-three years of service. Nestor previously served as the Senior Staff Analyst for the County of Solano, California Department of Health and Social Services. Mr. Aliga facilitated the call to action the Veterans' Community of Vallejo, CA for the transfer of ownership of the Mare Island Naval Cemetery, the oldest military cemetery on the west coast, over to the Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration.

He received his bachelor's in management from Saint Mary's College of California and a Master of Business Administration in Military Management from Touro University International. He currently resides in Vallejo, CA.

### **Dorothy A. Button, Petty Officer First Class, USCGR, (Retired) American Indian**

Dorothy A. Button is currently a Health Planner Assistant at the Seneca Nation Health System. She previously served as the Administrative Officer for Indian Health System and Director of Veterans Affairs, Seneca Nation of Indians. In addition to her professional career, Ms. Button served in various leadership positions within the Department of New York's American Legion, to include, Department Commander's Aide.

Ms. Button is a Veteran of the United States Coast Guard, retiring at the rank of Yeoman First Class (E-6) after twenty years of honorable service to the nation. Her military decorations include: Armed Forces Reserve Medal with Hourglass Device, Coast Guard Achievement Medal, Coast Guard Meritorious Team Commendation with one Gold Star, Coast Guard Good Conduct Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal, National Defense Service Medal, and Global War on Terror Service Medal.

She received her Bachelor Degree in Interdisciplinary Studies from the State University of New York at Fredonia and a Master of Strategic Leadership from the Saint Bonaventure University. She currently resides in West Valley, NY.

### **Lisa Carrington Firmin, Colonel, USAF (Retired) Hispanic**

Retired Colonel Lisa Carrington Firmin is the Military Liaison and Associate Vice President for Veteran and Military Affairs at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA). As the founding leader for Veteran and Military Affairs, she oversaw the consolidation and realignment of all veteran support services on campus and the creation of the Center for Military Affiliated Students to better support and serve veterans and military affiliated students. To help transition veterans to UTSA more efficiently, she helped to streamline the veteran certification process, instituted priority registration for veterans and developed a tailored Veteran Orientation program. She is the founder of the premier UTSA Top Scholar program, combining merit scholarships with student enrichment experiences. During her military service, Col. Carrington Firmin held a multitude of leadership roles and received numerous awards – including, but not limited to, the Legion of Merit Medal with oak leaf cluster, Bronze Star Medal, and the Defense Meritorious Service Medal.

Among her many professional honors, Col. Carrington Firmin was featured on the SA Movers and Shakers radio show, San Antonio Magazine and *LATINA Style Magazine*; earned the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce National Latina Leader award, the Governor of Texas' Yellow Rose award, the State of New Mexico's Major T.H. Baca award, the National Diversity Council's Trailblazer and Most Powerful and Influential Women in Texas awards, the Texas Diversity Council Greater San Antonio LGBT Ally award, the Hispanic Women's Network of Texas Latina Trailblazer award and the Northside Education Foundation Pillar award.

Colonel Carrington Firmin retired from the United States Air Force as its most senior ranking Latina officer, after leading UTSA's ROTC program to the best in the nation and being awarded a Bronze Star Medal for her efforts in combat as an Expeditionary Mission Support Group Commander in Iraq's Sunni Triangle. She currently resides in San Antonio, TX.

**William "Bill" Cundiff, Chief Master Sergeant, USAF (Retired)  
Pacific Islander**

Bill Cundiff is a proud Chamorro son from the southern village of Agat, Guam. In 1991, after 24 years of service with the U.S. Air Force, his military career culminated with his retirement at the rank of Chief Master Sergeant (E-9). His diverse career experiences include Supply Computer Systems Analyst, Professional Military Education Instructor and Manager 1 First Sergeant (Resource Management Superintendent), Family Support Center Deputy Director and Director. Bill Cundiff holds the record for First Sergeant of the Year - selected three times - at Aviano Air Base, Italy.

In 2010, Bill Cundiff retired from Andersen Air Force Base, Guam after ten years of Federal civil service as a Community Readiness Consultant. Selected in 2007 as the Civilian of the Year, GS-9 and above for the 36th Wing, he also holds the distinction of Senior Community Readiness Consultant of the Year, Pacific Air Forces. His collaboration with the Guam Legislature resulted in the passage of legislation that eliminated written and road tests for military spouses who possess a valid state driver's license. He conducted extensive research on the Military Spouse Dislocated Worker Program under the U.S. Department of Labor and participated in writing the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Andersen Air Force Base 36th Wing and Guam Department of Labor. The MoU resulted in a significant increase of military spouse recipients eligible for free education and training and ultimately earned college degrees from both Guam Community College and University of Guam. Bill Cundiff was awarded the Civilian Meritorious Service Medal for outstanding service.

Extremely active in his community, Bill Cundiff served as PTO President for three individual schools and founded the Guam U.S. Air Force Veterans Association, where he is currently serving his fourth term as president. He is currently serving his first term as Vice Chairman of the Guam Veterans Commission. He was previously chairman for three years. Bill Cundiff is married to Rosie Cruz Terlaje and they have three children: Tressa, Andrea, and Bill 11. They have ten grandchildren. He currently resides in Agat, Guam.

**Margaret G. “Muggs” Garvin**  
**American Indian**

Margaret G. Garvin is the Veterans Service Officer for the Ho-Chunk Nation and also serves as the Division Manager of HCN Veterans Affairs. She was previously the County Veterans Service Officer for Monroe and Jackson Counties in Wisconsin.

Ms. Garvin is in her third term serving the CVSOA-WI County Veterans Service Officer Association of Wisconsin as the Secretary. The CVSOA-WI consists of 72 counties and the 11 tribes of Wisconsin. She is also a member of the NACVSO – National Association of County Veterans Service Officers. While an active member of both associations she continues to advocate and create a great rapport with other tribes throughout the United States as the Ho-Chunk Nation does not have a reservation, the tribal members live nationwide. While in the US Navy, Margaret was stationed in Washington DC for 4 years as a Yeoman. She acquired her passion for the military while stationed at NMPC-6 Pride, Professionalism and Personal Excellence Command. After her time on active duty, Margaret continues her passion for the military by serving all veterans as a CVSO.

Ms. Garvin has education within Supervisory Management and Human Services and continues to ensure all veterans obtain their federal, state, county and tribal benefits. Margaret spends her spare time sewing native regalia, swimming, and golfing with her two sons. She currently resides in Black River Falls, WI.

**Robson M. Henry, Sergeant First Class, USA (Retired)**  
**Pacific Islander**

Mr. Henry is retired Army Sergeant First Class (E-7), who served two tours of duty in Iraq, and one tour of duty in both Saudi Arabia and Haiti during his twenty-six years of active duty. He is currently the President of the Kosrae Island Veterans Association and Vice-Chairman of Civil Society of Kosrae.

Mr. Henry is a fierce advocate for Veterans, focusing on identifying programs that provide Veterans from the Federated States of Micronesia with access to high quality health care, access to mental health services, and assists in navigating the various benefits and health care services offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

He received his Associate Degree in Business Administration from the Community College of Micronesia. Mr. Henry resides in Kosrae, Federated States of Micronesia with his wife and two children.

**Irvin Lyons Jr., Sergeant Major, USA (Retired)**  
**African American**

Mr. Lyons Jr. is a retired Army Sergeant Major (E-9) and is currently the Vice-Commander of Region VI of the National Association for Black Veterans (NABVETS). One of the core missions of NABVETS is to generate and preserve the historical records for minority Veterans and promote necessary revisions to assure historical integrity. Irvin has held several key leadership positions within various Veteran Service Organizations to include Kentucky NABVETS State Commander, Past State Commander Military Order of the Purple Heart, Past Chapter President Bluegrass Command Sergeant Major/Sergeant Major Association, Chairman NAACP Veterans Committee, and Chaplain Fort Knox Buffalo Soldier Motorcycle Club.

In addition, he served on active duty in the United States Army for thirty-one years and served in Vietnam. His military decorations include Military Order of the Purple Heart with one Oak Leaf Cluster, Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters, Good Conduct Medal tenth award, South Vietnam Service Medal with two Bronze Stars, and Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross Unit Citation with Palm. He currently resides in Vine Grove, KY.

**Robert “Bobby” V. McDonald**  
**African American**

Bobby McDonald is president and executive director of the Black Chamber of Commerce of Orange County, and he is leading the organization into its 30th year. Under his leadership, the Black Chamber of Commerce of Orange County has partnered consistently with minority business associations, local chambers and legislators to provide support and advocate for the county’s many small-business owners.

Mr. McDonald developed the chamber’s educational outreach programs and has established the chamber’s veteran’s business network programs. Through a partnership with Explorer Studios, two award winning educational films have been produced: “Building the Dream” and “History of the Buffalo Soldiers”. McDonald is now a member of the PBS So Cal Board of Trustees where he has assisted with historic African American PBS presentations such as “The March at 50” and “African Americans, Many Rivers to Cross”.

His many honors include the Human Relations Leadership Award (from the Orange County Human Relations Commission), being named the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Millennial Man of the Year by COR AME Church, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. International Alumni Brother of the Year in 1999, and Distinguished Alumnus Award from Cal State Fullerton. He has been president of the CSUF Alumni Association, president of the CSU Statewide Alumni Council, recognized as one of CSU’s Statewide Outstanding African American Alumni, and one of Cal State Fullerton’s 50th Anniversary prominent alums. LA Harbor College, for their 60th Anniversary, bestowed their prestigious Outstanding Community Leader, their Alumnus of the Year award and inducted McDonald into their Athletic Hall of Fame.

McDonald is a U.S. Navy Vietnam Veteran, serving four years and separating as an Aviation Boatswain's Mate Aircraft Handler Petty Officer 3rd Class. He is also a member of the 9th and 10th (Horse) Calvary Association-Buffalo Soldiers, a former Student Body President at Los Angeles Harbor College and he served as a governor’s appointee to the California Cultural Historical Endowment Board and the 17 member State Board of Governors of the California Community College System where he created and chaired the Board’s Veteran’s Affairs Committee. He was recently re-appointed to the Orange County Veterans Advisory Council, where he is now chair of the council. Mr. McDonald resides in Anaheim, CA.

**\*\*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. She currently resides in Accokeek, MD.

**Carlos Rivera**  
**Hispanic American**

Carlos Rivera served 4 years in the US Air Force and attained the rank of SGT(E4). During his service in the military, he was temporarily assigned to Kadena Air Base, Okinawa to support a unit that was permanently stationed there. Mr. Rivera is the Founder and President of Legacy of Valor. Legacy of Valor is a nonprofit organization established to research and identify gaps in services to Veterans and their families. In his capacity as president, Carlos was the driving force in establishing a monument to honor and remember El Paso County, TX Vietnam Veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Mr. Rivera has served as the National Vice-Commander of the American GI Forum. He was responsible for assisting the National Commander and Board Members in the management of day to day operations of a Congressionally Chartered Hispanic Veterans Service Organization.

Carlos led the effort to establish a Veterans Business Association in El Paso, TX. The association was founded to advocate for El Paso area Veterans and active duty personnel interested in start-up, expansion, acquisition of small businesses, and technical assistance in business development.

He received his bachelor's degree in Social Work and Sociology from the University of Texas at El Paso and Master of Social Work from the University of Texas. He currently resides in El Paso, TX.

**Glenda Wrenn Gordon, MD, MSHP, FAPA**  
**African American**

Glenda Wrenn Gordon, MD, MSHP, FAPA is a board-certified psychiatrist and Director of the Kennedy-Satcher Center for Mental Health Equity at the Morehouse School of Medicine where she is also an Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences.

A 1999 West Point graduate (recipient of the Distinguished Cadet Award), Dr. Wrenn survived a near-fatal car accident while a cadet, which left her with permanent disabilities and foreshortened her military career. Her commitment to a lifetime of service to the nation has since been actualized through her community service and professional work.

Currently, she works clinically with women Veterans at the Women's Center of Excellence for Specialty Care Education at the Atlanta VA. She is involved with many efforts that benefit Veterans including promoting military cultural competence among healthcare providers and developing integrated systems of care that address mental health and physical health. She currently resides in Decatur, Georgia with her husband and three children.

\*\* Chairwoman