



Together Always

**AVVA - AT LARGE NEWSLETTER
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I hope this newsletter finds you well. These are my notes from the Wisconsin State Council quarterly meeting on Saturday, March 19, 2022, in Waupaca, including a separate AVVA meeting.

AVVA Report

Pat gave her AVVA report to the State Council.

- Pat reported on the AVVA National convention: AVVA is here to support veterans, future incorporation needs to be discussed on (potentially) both the State and/or Chapter levels, and the VVA Constitution requires Chapter AVVA members must be a non-voting member of a Chapters Board of Directors.
- Pat shared that only about 15% of applicants under the Caregivers Act are receiving benefits--an unacceptably low level.
- Chapter elections must be held in April. Dick is elections chair for the State Representative election to be held at the June meeting.

AVVA Representatives Meeting

AVVA representatives had a separate meeting after the regular State Council meeting.

- Pat shared several items:
 - Pat discussed the importance of increased AVVA activity, including potential state level incorporation.
 - Since VVA will eventually cease to exist, AVVA is considered its “legacy” organization. We expect to continue VVA’s mission of “never again will one generation of veterans abandon another” as well as supporting all veterans, regardless of when they served.
- Rick Talford, AVVA Region 6 Director, discovered multiple items with the group:
 - Rick asked if the “Together Always” portion of the AVVA logo should be retained or modified once VVA is dissolved. Rick also noted the logo appears to have been removed from AVVA literature, etc.
 - Rick voted against the proposed budget due to the amount allocated for travel expenses for in-person meetings. Rick would like to see at least some of the meetings held over Zoom as they were during the pandemic; is also concerned about the cancellation of a dedicated line for those meetings.
 - Rick shared that “veteran” was removed from Article III, Section 3.02.b Membership (Incarcerated Members) at the National Convention in November. He shared that no money has been allocated for the incarcerated program in the current AVVA budget.

State Council

Special Guest Presentation

A representative from Veterans Outreach of Wisconsin spoke about their organization.

- Their 3 areas of concentration are housing, food insecurity, and mental health. The organization currently has 7 employees and 15-20 volunteers.
- They are implementing a “mobile marketplace” to address the food insecurity issues by using a converted truck set up like a grocery store to travel to current veteran facilities (i.e., King). They track the “numbers” to share with local veteran services and/or groups to determine the need in their community. Food donations for the truck come from the communities themselves, including local food banks/pantries.
- Veterans Outreach is trying to expand the concept of the tiny house from their current 15 tiny houses in Racine; (the CVSO in Rhinelander has requested information). The tiny houses have individual sleeping quarters and “community” bathrooms. Currently, the only animals allowed in the houses are service dogs.

President's Report (Michael Demske)

- Mike reminded Chapters that their Membership Chair needs to notify National when a member passes; a copy should be sent to the State Council. That address will be removed from "The Veteran" mailing list.
- Our next meeting is on June 25 at Camp Victory (N9839 Sterling Avenue, Willard, WI; 715-225-0154). A block of rooms has been reserved at the Super 8 in Neillsville.
- Mike reported that legislation to decrease Wisconsin property taxes for veterans with a 70% disability (H243 and S245) did **not** go through. Contact your legislators to find out **WHY** it failed after it came out of Committee with unanimous bipartisan support.

Secretary's Report – Jim Mullarkey

- Since there was no quorum, there are no "minutes" from the December 2021 meeting. The Secretary's "notes" from that meeting will be sent with the minutes from the current meeting.
- The new State Council website (it is still "vvawi.org") will be ready beginning 3/26/22. The WebHost was changed to Go Daddy for simplicity, ease of use (by both user and the webmaster), substantial cost savings (20% of the previous yearly amount), increased site security, and ability to be used on all devices. All historical data will be transferred. The new site will include Chapter officers and delegates, a tab for AVVA (including Region 6 Director, Wisconsin State Representative, and Wisconsin At-Large representative--if the information is submitted), and a link to recorded Zoom meetings. Please send your feedback to Jim.

Treasurer's Report – Pat Craney

- The Northeast Foundation (they fundraised in Region 6 states) has been dissolved and the remaining funds were distributed equally to those states. The Wisconsin State Council received its portion of the funds.

Region 6 Director's Report (John Margowski)

- Many veterans believe VVA is a "wartime only" organization so we need to correct that misconception. John has discussed a Region 6 meeting with several State Councils. Iowa initially proposed the meeting; Minnesota may be interested in hosting one (even though its State Council has dissolved).
- John gave the group an update on the Government Affairs Committee (any committee member is currently part of the Committee). The Committee would also like to do away with resolutions that only "feel good" but don't actually accomplish anything. VVA President Jack McManus would like to consolidate some committees.
- John hopes to discuss Veterans Voices at the June meeting.

At Large Director's Report (Richard Lindbeck)

- Richard discussed the restructuring of VVA and the need to revitalize the organization; staff changes at National include new attorneys and membership people.
- He recommends everyone review the Working Group I report; although it is long, it is definitely worth it.
- Richard suggested that VVA members join AVVA as dual members (there are currently about 500 dual members nationally); lifetime dues are \$50.
- Richard recommended everyone review the latest version of the constitution (it can be found at vva.org); there is now a lot of VVA information online, especially compared to what there used to be.
- Upcoming national events: 2022 National Leadership Conference (8/9-8/13, Greenville, SC), 2023 National Convention (August, Orlando, FL), and the 2025 National Convention (August, New Orleans, LA).

Legislative Committee (Dan Sciuti)

- Dan reported on VVA press releases (on 3/1/22 and 3/17/22) regarding respiratory issues as well as proposed legislation. Bills: HR3967 (toxic exposure: foreign and domestic, past and present) passed the House (multiple Wisconsin members voted "no"); HR3402 and S976 (caring for survivors); HR366 and S325 (vets empowerment); HR3575 and S1944 (readjustment counselors); HR239 (equal contraception access); HR5575 (nurse and physician assistant salary increases), and HR1282 and S344 (Major Richard Star Act).
- Dan was appointed by Mike but more members are needed for the Committee; please contact Dan if you can assist him.

Region 4 Director's Report

- Bob Morzenti has resigned due to health issues; Joe Heil has been appointed to the position until the June elections are held.

At Large Director's Report – Greg Foye

- Greg reminded everyone to watch for phishing e-mails; he recently received one that was supposedly from Richard (it listed him as President of the State Council) but it didn't match Richard's e-mail address.

Scholarship Committee – Virginia Nuske

- Three (3) scholarships (\$1,500 per year) were awarded for the 2022-2023 school year. Virginia received 15 inquiries and 11 entries (10 were direct descendants of Vietnam veterans and 1 was an uncle). All entries were reviewed by 2 Vietnam veterans and 2 AVVA members; there was a tie this year so additional discussions were needed to break the tie.

Old Business

- There are still patches for sale.

New Business

- Chapters 1143 (Marinette) and 618 (Sheboygan) are being dissolved.
- John Margowski, Tom Heitman, and Greg Foye were appointed to the Nomination Committee for the June elections.
- May 14th is Lao Hmong Day.
- This year, the Wall That Heals will be in Franklin from June 28-July 3.

Upcoming Events:

June 25, 2022

Wisconsin State Council quarterly meeting and picnic; Camp Victory (N9839 Sterling Road, Willard, WI)

August 9 – August 13, 2022

National Leadership Conference, Greenville, SC

September 24, 2022

Wisconsin State Council quarterly meeting; Par 4 Comfort Suites, Waupaca

December 2-3, 2022

Wisconsin State Council quarterly meeting and holiday gathering; Par 4 Comfort Suites, Waupaca

May I send you this newsletter by e-mail? If so, please contact me at jlfoye@frontier.com with a subject line of "AVVA At-Large Newsletter" or by phone at 715-842-9197 (please leave your phone number so I can return your call). Any suggestions on what (or how much) information to include in this newsletter is greatly appreciated. Thank you!

Take care.



Joy L. Foye

Wisconsin AVVA At-Large Representative