



Together Always

**AVVA - AT LARGE NEWSLETTER
VOLUME 20
OCTOBER, 2022**

I hope you are enjoying the wonderful autumn colors. These are my notes from the Wisconsin State Council quarterly meeting on Saturday, September 24 in Waupaca and the AVVA meeting that immediately followed.

AVVA Report

Pat gave her report to the State Council:

- There was a technical issue for submission of elections results to National for State AVVA Representative and Chapter representatives; that issue has now been resolved.
- The Region 6 Deputy Director has been attending National meetings during Director Rick Talford's absence.
- Pat shared concerns about the AVVA Leadership Conference (similar to those for the VVA Conference).
- Pat reminded us that it is critical for Wisconsin AVVA members to "step up to the plate", once again, to make sure AVVA remains a positive legacy for VVA.
- Pat will discuss proposed by-law changes at the AVVA meeting right after the State Council meeting.

AVVA Meeting

- The group discussed the pros and cons of state incorporation. The consensus was that incorporation would be premature at this time.
- Pat discussed several items she would like to submit to National as by-law changes, including the ability to re-assign delegates and to nominate candidates for office from the floor (both are similar to what VVA does.) Pat requested that we review the AVVA National by-laws and send her any suggestions for changes.

State Council

President's Report – Mike Demske

- Leadership Conference: Attendees received an orange vest at the Conference in honor of Agent Orange Day; the POW/MIA seminar was very good; tiny houses for homeless veterans and the America's Warrior Partnership that is involved in veteran suicide reduction were discussed.
- Chapter 220 (Madison area) is being dissolved; 3 Chapters in Wisconsin have dissolved this year.
- Elections for Regional Directors will be held after the regular meeting.

Treasurer's Report – Pat Craney

- The WSC continues to be financially stable.

Vice President's Report – Dan Sciuti

- TV commercials for Camp LeJeune compensation can be misleading. John Willman (Chapter 479) pointed out PFAS are the "Agent Orange" of the future.
- Jack McManus e-mail scam discussed.
- Update your myhealthvet account (under healthlivingassessment) before 9/30/22 to retain access to the site.
- There were fewer suicides in 2019 than in 2018; daily suicides are now approximately 17/day.
- Many Wisconsin counties need poll workers for the 2022 mid-term elections; a handout for vetthe.vote/pages/sign-up-now; veterans can receive \$150 to work on election day.

Secretary's Report – Jim Mullarkey

- Jim did a “demo” of the newest version of the vvawi.org website and requested input on the latest version
 - The “home” tab has information from National and WSC and a calendar (currently only Jim can add entries; this will be change in the future; contact Jim if you want to add information).
 - The VVA/WSC/AVVA tab has information from National, Chapters, and State and At Large Representatives; if something is underlined, it is a direct link to that person. WSC information includes standing committees; a gallery (WI information only); election reports (“representative” is the number of delegates to the WSC; make sure you have alternate delegates on the form) and financial reports; and In Memoriam (when/if the “In Memoriam” form is received from a Chapter, Jim sends it to National. He then searches on-line for information about the veteran who has passed (obituaries, etc.), compiles the information then puts it on vvawi.org. If the Chapter submitting the form wants a surviving spouse to continue to receive The Veteran, the Chapter must request that from National).
 - There is also a Post Vietnam Veterans tab for information regarding post-Vietnam conflicts.
 - The “balloon” in the lower right corner sends a text message directly to Jim who responds to you (via the phone number he has for you); all messages are encrypted to provide additional security.
 - The web-site is a “living document” that can, AND WILL, change; let Jim know what types of changes you would like to see. Is it easy to access? Is it easy to navigate? Is it easy to print from (can you print a PDF from the website without downloading Adobe Acrobat)?
- Jim and Dan Sciuti and working with Dr. Jeffrey Whittle on his research. If you haven't already done so, please complete the survey on vvawi.org; no personal information is retained or shared with anyone.

Region 6 Director – John Margowski

- The Leadership Conference was discussed. There was a lack of coordination between VVA and AVVA with respect to the seminars held. A discussion of what went well at the Conference and what can be improved occurred. U-Haul printed information (for free) to be included in Conference packets; a number of presenters didn't submit anything or submitted it after the deadline resulting in little useful information in the packets. It was suggested the Conference be shortened to 2-3 days vs. 5 days and it exclude dinners.
- Camp LeJeune: VVA initially advised members not to sign up with an attorney to file for compensation since the attorney would need to be well-versed in VA/federal benefits due to issues with overlapping and offsets to current benefits. The Camp LeJeune Justice Act (part of the PACT Act) is a new Federal Act requiring veterans to use an attorney to file a claim; claims must be filed in the Eastern District within a limited time-frame; any compensation filed under this Act is subject to state and federal taxes. If a veteran decides to seek an attorney under the Camp LeJeune Justice Act, read the contract very carefully since a large portion of any award may go to the attorney (possibly 40%-70%) instead of the veteran.
- There previously wasn't any interest in a Region 6 Conference but John will follow up again at a later date.
- Chapter 101 (Wisconsin Rapids) shared that the Wisconsin Rapids CVSO office will be holding seminars on the PACT Act on October 26 at 2:00 PM and 6:00 PM.

National At Large Director – Richard Lindbeck

- The Leadership Conference was discussed..
- An AVVA brochure on survivor's benefits was distributed at National and handed out at our meeting.
- Richard will be in Prairie du Chien next week and will take a start-up kit with him.
- Four (4) past WSC Presidents were at the meeting: Bob Piaro, John Margowski, Mike Demske (also the currentl President) and Richard Lindbeck.
- Richard reminded everyone that the life membership dues are only \$50 for VVA and AVVA (if you are a VVA member) and encouraged VVA members to join AVVA.

Veterans Affairs/Council of Veterans Programs – Vern Larson

- Vern discussed the controversy at the Union Grove Veterans Home. Newspaper articles were written about hydration issues at the facility, but no citations were issued (the only citation issued was for gloves not being worn).
- The Chippewa Falls facility just received a reward for its excellent care.
- Vern shared that Mary Kolar, Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary, appears to pay a lot of attention to what is going on at all the veterans homes.
- Vern noted that coordination among numerous veterans service organizations allows veterans to have representation at State legislative meetings on veterans issues.

Committee Reports

- POW/MIA – Duane Canon
 - From 1/1 – 9/24/22, there were 70 WWII, 19 Korea and 91 Vietnam KIA's recovered; there are still 1,528 unaccounted for (26 from Wisconsin)
- Legislative – Dan Sciuti
 - More than 50,000 veterans are affected by benefits offsets.
 - HR4350 (the National Defense Authorization Act) authorizes DOD activities and programs and includes a variety of programs.
 - HR 8398 (the Drive Act) reimburses veterans at 41.5 cents/mile compared to Federal employees being reimbursed at 62.5 cents/mile.
 - HR 6961 (the Dignity for Military Sexual Trauma) deals with claims for MST.
 - The PACT Act includes the Camp LeJeune Justice Act.

New Business

- A motion was made for donations to the Kentucky and Puerto Rico State Councils (2 VVA Chapters in Kentucky and the 1 Chapter in Puerto Rico) for flood relief; motion passed.
- A minimum of 3 people from the Oconomowoc Chapter (possibly as many as 5) will represent the Wisconsin State Council at the Massing of the Colors on Veterans Day in Washington, DC. National will provide \$4,000 for each State Council (after the event) to assist in the cost of hotel and travel expenses for the color guards.

For The Benefit of the Order

- Joe Heil, Chapter 5, has cancer; please keep him in your thoughts and prayers.
- Dates for 2023 meetings were discussed: 3/18 – Waupaca; 6/24 – Waupaca (tentatively (to be discussed further at December 2022 meeting); 9/23 – Waupaca; 12/8 – 12/9 – Waupaca
- Dan Sciuti brought up a recommendation out of committee to begin 50/50 drawings at the end of each 2023 meeting beginning at the March, 2023 meeting. Tickets will be \$5 each with a limit of 1 per person (VVA and VVA members and guests are eligible to participate). The winning ticket holder will receive 50% of the proceeds; 50% will go to the WSC. No second was needed; motion approved.

Upcoming Events:

December 2-3, 2022

Wisconsin State Council holiday gathering and quarterly meeting; Par 4 Comfort Suites, Waupaca
March 18, 2023

Wisconsin State Council quarterly meeting; Par 4 Comfort Suites; Waupaca
June 24, 2023

Waupaca (tentative; to be discussed further at December 2022 meeting)

September 23, 2023

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

December 8-9, 2023

Wisconsin State Council holiday gathering and quarterly meeting; 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!

Have a Happy Halloween and Happy Thanksgiving.



Joy L. Foye

Wisconsin AVVA At-Large Representative