



Together Always

**AVVA - AT LARGE NEWSLETTER
VOLUME 22
APRIL 2023**

Here are my notes for the March 18, 2023 quarterly Wisconsin State Council meeting in Waupaca and the AVVA meeting that followed immediately. This newsletter is much longer than usual due to the large volume of important information at the meeting.

AVVA Report

Pat gave her report to the State Council:

- Pat will be running for position of Deputy Director for Region 6 at the National Convention.
- AVVA members will have a meeting immediately after the WSC meeting to discuss proposed AVVA by-law changes to be presented at the AVVA National Convention. They include changing from “dual” to “full” membership for VVA members and the ability for a delegate from one Chapter to vote on behalf of another at National Conventions (as VVA does). Wisconsin is eligible to send 7 delegates to the National Convention.

AVVA Meeting

Pat distributed copies of our proposed changes to the by-laws at the 2023 National Convention. The following suggestions were discussed with AVVA members providing their opinion on the proposed changes.

- Article III – Members, Section 3.02.c Membership: Eliminate dual membership for VVA members. The proposed revision would be: Remove “Dual Members” as a class of membership. Eliminate indented c. which describes Dual Membership. The revised by-law would read: **The Corporation shall have two (2) Classes of members: Regular Members and Incarcerated Members.** Since support for this change was not unanimous, Pat will propose it as a representative for her Chapter not as the State Representative.
- Article III – Members, Section 3.03: Eliminate wording regarding dual membership for VVA members. The proposed revision would be: Change the section on eligibility to take out Dual membership. The revised by-law would read: **Regular membership shall be granted to any persons who wish to further the purposes of the Corporation.** Since support for this change was not unanimous, Pat will propose it as a representative for her Chapter not as the State Representative.
- Article III – Members, Section 3.07.b Voting: Currently does not allow absentee voting or allowing a delegate vote from one Chapter to vote on behalf of another Chapter at the National Convention. The proposed revision would be: Delete “nor will any member of one Chapter vote on behalf of another chapter”. The revised by-law would read: **There will be no absentee ballots allowed in elections at any level.** Unanimous support.
- Article VIII – Chapters, Section 8.03 Incorporated Chapters: Currently an incorporated chapter located in an unincorporated state, reports to a regional director or the National Board of Director by-passing a state President or representative if there is one. The proposed revision would change the wording to be the same as for unincorporated chapters regarding who incorporated chapter report to. The revised by-law would read: **Incorporated chapters report to their state. In the absence of a state President or representative, the chapter members shall be overseen by the regional director. In the absence of both state and regional officials, the chapter will be overseen by the National Board of Directors.** Unanimous support.
- Article VIII – Chapters, Section 8.04 Delegate of Record: Currently indicates the alternate Convention delegate must be from the same Chapter as they were appointed by. The proposed revision would be: Delete this sentence to be in line with the change (if in effect) done on Article III, Section 3.07. The revised by-law would read: **Each chapter will be allowed one voting delegate, elected to represent the chapter**

at the national convention of the Corporation and at state level meetings. The delegate for each chapter shall be the representative, president, or their appointed alternate. The delegate, and/or alternate, to the national convention must be registered with the National elections Committee and be registered for the Convention. Unanimous support.

- Article X – Amendment of By-Laws: The last sentence currently reads “Bylaws **may** be amended by the affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the delegates present and voting at the national convention.” The proposed revision is: change the word “may to “shall only”. The revised by-law would read: **Written notification of proposed amendments to these Bylaws must be given to the Bylaws Committee one hundred twenty (120) days prior to the Corporation’s national convention. The bylaws committee shall submit the amendments to the membership not less than ninety (90) days prior to the national convention. These Bylaws shall only be amended by the affirmative vote of two thirds (2/3) of the delegates present and voting at the national convention.**

State Council Notes

Guest Speaker – Dr. Thomas Hall, VVA Chair of the PTSD/Substance Abuse Committee
Dr. Hall served as a Military Police sentry dog handler in Vietnam between 1969 and 1970. Dr. Hall is presently a professor at St. Mary’s University, Leavenworth, Kansas following his retirement from Kansas City Kansas Community College. In addition to his work at St. Mary’s University, Dr. Hall is presenting workshops, seminars, and other training around the country. Dr. Hall’s focus remains on PTSD, Suicide Prevention, Substance Use Disorder (SUD), and Secondary Traumatic Stressors. He has been a veterans advocate for over 30 years.

PTSD

- Denial of PTSD comes in many forms and isn’t always readily apparent. It affects the entire fabric of our being and colors our analysis of life and our relationships. PTSD is part of the cost of war and “no one gets a pass”. Dr. Hall believes PTSD is substantially underdiagnosed since we show only our “highlight reels/best sides” to other people. Being honest about symptoms is the hardest thing to do. Everyone experiences PTS (Post Traumatic Stress throughout our lives (through loss of a loved one, divorce, job loss, war, violence, etc.); the “D” (disorder) occurs when PTS interrupts your everyday life for an extended period of time. Dr. Hall noted that if you don’t deal with PTSD, it **WILL** deal with you.
- Neurological changes (psychic numbing and anger) often occur in a war, and results in the persistent memory of the trauma; it is important to understand these changes in order to deal with PTSD. PTSD is different for everyone; individuals PTSD must look at what’s going on in their lives and how they are dealing with various situations.
- PTSD has had a lot of names (i.e., battle fatigue, combat neurosis, shell shock, combat disorder, soldier’s heart, etc.) and isn’t a single thing; it is a complex of many things (physical psychological, neuropsychiatric, neurological, etc.) which could have originated from a single incident.
- There is no single way to treat someone with PTSD. It is important to acknowledge that loved ones are part of the journey in dealing with PTSD so treatment should include a level of family therapy.
- PTSD affects the individual in many ways making it difficult to return to the community, re-adjusting to family, return to education and/or employment and more. Life on a good day can be hard, but life with PTSD may require a tune-up (maintenance) every so often, making maintenance SMART.
- If you know someone with PTSD and you want to help them by telling your story, it may not be the best medicine. Rather LISTEN, just LISTEN! Listening to their story can be cathartic, nurturing and so important for the human connection.
- Dr. Hall was asked about using psychedelics to treat PTSD. He responded that more research under controlled conditions needs to be conducted on its own merits and resources. The politization of psychedelics (i.e., LSD, MDMA and ketamine) makes its use more difficult to objectively study psychedelics and their potential use(s).

Substance Use Disorder (SUD)

- It is important to remember that no one ever takes a substance with the intention of becoming addicted nor do binge drinkers think their behavior and can morph into other additions. Those become addicted try to stop their addiction a thousand times.
- Physical dependence can happen with chronic use of alcohol or a variety of drugs (either prescription or street drugs); it can be a single drug, a combination of drugs, or a combination of drugs and

alcohol over time. Physical dependence doesn't constitute SUD. Addiction can occur when someone is obsessive compulsive (a person has uncontrollable reoccurring thoughts (obsessions) and/or behaviors (compulsions) that he/she feels the urge to repeat over and over) and loses control.

- Guns, PTSD, SUD and suicide: veterans are 1-1/2 times more likely to die by suicide than non-veteran adults and guns are more commonly involved among veterans than non-veteran suicides.
- Someone with SUD doesn't deal with themselves, their partners, their family, their work, or their community. They must go through the difficult steps of learning how to cope again during sobriety. Loved ones need to be patient but should not condone disrespect from the person with SUD.
- Each of us can help someone but we need to remember the 10/20/90 rule of engagement when holding workshops, presentations, seminars and town halls. Change it up every 10 minutes (or the audience begins to fade, lose focus and lack attention). Every 20 minutes, make some kind of movement or change in the presentation (incorporate an activity, get responses to what is being discussed, etc.). Finally, 90 minutes is the physical rule (learning time is equivalent to seat time), the brain goes dead and engagement is lost after 90 minutes of sitting!

PTSD and SUD can't thrive when people know about them. We can be agents of change for those suffering with PTSD and SUD. We are always learning and growing but it happens in small/or incremental changes.

President's Report – Mike Demske

- Mike has some poppies with Vietnam campaign color he got from a VVA Chapter in West Virginia. If you're interested in them, please contact Mike for additional information.

Vice President's Report – Dan Sciuti

- No report; Dan had an excused absence; his report can be found at vvawi.org

Treasurer's Report – Pat Craney

- The State Council had fewer expenses than income during the last quarter.

Secretary's Report – Jim Mullarkey

- Jim reminded Chapters that elections and financial reports are due. Election reports are required each year only if there are changes; otherwise, they are required every 2 years. Jim explained the notations on the "Elections and Financial Reports" chart sent to the Chapters and located on the WSC website. An "N" next to the "year" (i.e., 20-24N) indicates National has received the information; no year or a "blank" means Jim has not. An "N" without dates indicates VVA National has received the report, but the WSC has not. If there is no VVA National notation but your received one, please send the verification you received from National to Jim so he can update the information. It is also important to include **valid** e-mail addresses for Chapter officers.
- There have been significant changes to the website (vvawi.org). Dr. Whittle's research is still active (it is still "scrolling" across the home page) so please click on the link and take the survey if you haven't already done so. Jim continues to request suggestions/ideas/improvements be sent to him.

Region 6 Director – John Margowski

- John placed a list of the current Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) Executive Leadership team (James Bond, Secretary-designee; Christopher McElgunn, Deputy Secretary; and Joseph Hoey, Assistant Deputy Secretary) on a table for the Chapters to take.
- The Region 6 Conference is scheduled to be held in Johnston, Iowa (near Des Moines) on May 19-21. The Conference registration fee includes lunch; reservations at the Conference hotel (Stoney Creek Hotel & Conference Center; 515-334-9000) can be made only between April 7-28. Please contact John and let him know how many will be attending the lunch so he has an accurate count.
- Wisconsin AB245 (which reduced the eligibility threshold to claim the veterans and surviving spouse's property tax credit) died in the legislature last year due to lack of support. Concerned Veterans of American (a national organization) lobbied against the bill based to their dissatisfaction with the federal VA even though this bill applies only to the WDVA.
- AB102 has been introduced (to replace that AB245); it has been referred to the Ways and Means Committee but currently has no support. If we want the bill to pass we **MUST** contact our State legislators (Assembly and Senate) and tell them to support this new bill. **(I just recently learned**

that SB102, the same bill except in the Wisconsin Senate, also needs your support. Please contact your State Senator requesting support for this bill).

- Hypertension and Monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance (MGUS) have been added to the PACT Act for Vietnam-era veterans. Five new presumptive locations have been added for Agent Orange; none of them are located in the U.S.
- John requested all attendees re-read the VVA National Strategic Plan for Dissolution and discuss it with their Chapter members. He expects the Strategic Plan to be discussed at the National Board of Directors meeting in April. It won't be discussed at the National Convention in August but may be at the October Board meeting. The Wisconsin State Council and Chapters will need to address how to continue if/when VVA National goes away. Since there is no action from National VVA, it is too early to be able to discuss this fully but the Strategic Plan is a good place to start for future needs.
- James Mullarkey, VVA Chapter 425, made a motion that a committee be formed which would be composed of the WSC Board of Directors, the Executive Officers, the Executive Director, the four WSC Region Directors, and At Large Director, the AVVA State Representative and VVA Region 6 Director (John Margowski), all of whom would be charged to: 1) review the potential implications of the VVA Strategic Plan for Dissolution of the WSC and its VVA Chapters; 2) identify the consequences, legally and operationally, of the continuation of the WSC; 3) develop a plan of action the WSC must follow given the National and State Council dissolution; and 4) identify directions for VVA Chapters, specifically a) should take if there is a National dissolution and/or WSC dissolution and b) recommendations to continue a chapter with the dissolution of VVA National and VVA WSC. Second by Vern Larson, Chapter 635; motion passed.

National At Large Director – Richard Lindbeck

- Richard discussed the future of VVA. A committee comprised of 4 National officers has been tasked with making a dissolution recommendation; the membership will consider any recommendation(s) and make the final decision. President McManus suggested dissolution be discussed at the 2023, 2025, and 2027 Conventions before a final decision is made. Richard expressed concern about waiting too long to make the decision due to aging of the membership. If a dissolution plan is not made and implemented, all VVA assets go to the State of New York upon VVA's dissolution.
- Several items were discussed at the last National Board meeting: leadership conferences; Rhode Island is the only location receiving Household Goods funds; State Councils must have a government affairs liaison; and, holding more town halls, with multiple issues being addressed at the town halls.
- A dual VVA/AVVA pin is scheduled to be available at the August National Convention.
- The National Mall will host a dedication to Vietnam Veterans 50th anniversary on May 11-13.

Veterans Affairs Committee/Council of Veterans Programs – Vern Larson

- The new Wisconsin designee for Secretary of Veterans Affairs, James Bond, is setting up a meeting with all veterans organizations including VVA. Mike Demske, Richard Lindbeck, John Margowski and Vern Larson will represent the Wisconsin State Council at the meeting.
- The Council on Veterans Programs is becoming more active. April 26 is the Veterans Organization Day at the State Capital and will include a band, procession to the Capital, meetings with legislators (to discuss AB102, the University of Wisconsin MIA Recovery Project, and decreasing the 5-year residency requirement for license reduction).
- Vern met with the WDVA Secretary and his leadership team including discussions on: increasing knowledge of veterans benefits; strengthening the relationship with veterans service organization groups; new veteran initiatives and supporting them; care at veterans homes; and a resolution to support funding for blue ribbon initiatives in Governor Evers' budget was adopted. Vern will be meeting with the WDVA again on April 5; please send him any suggestions/questions you have.

Committee Reports:

POW/MIA Report – Duane Canon

- Duane provided updated information on MIA/KIA numbers for World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

Legislative – Dan Sciuti

- Dan had an excused absence; his report was submitted electronically prior to the meeting. The handout highlighted budget proposals supporting veterans from a White House press release dated March 9, 2023 (including the PACT Act) and a February 9, 2023 press release Governor Evers' office; proposed Wisconsin Legislature Assembly and Senate bills affecting veterans and the naming

celebration of the USS Telesforo Trinidad (an Arleigh Burke-class Destroyer memorializing Medal of Honor recipient U.S. Navy Fireman Second Class Telesforo de la Cruz Trinidad).

Agent Orange Committee – Mike Demske

- Mike reported that Wisconsin is not one of the states authorized to submit information about children of Vietnam veterans to the Agent Orange/Toxic Exposure's national registry. The Wall That Heals will be in Crivitz June 1-4.

Scholarship – Ginny Nuske

- The Scholarship Committee received 7 applications and 5 inquiries from schools for the (3) \$1,500 scholarships; all applicants were grandchildren of Vietnam veterans. There was a tie for 3rd place; which was resolved by the Committee.

Old Business:

None

New Business:

- Make sure you discuss the bills Vern mentioned with your Chapters and/or anyone you know who is interested in supporting veterans.
- There is a new Federal cemetery between Tomahawk and Minocqua.
- Mike Johnson, Chapter 236, shared that the War Memorial will hold a ceremony on March 29 to commemorate the release of the last POW's in Vietnam.
- Chapters 767 and 5 shared names of Chapter members they lost since the last meeting.

Upcoming Events:

June 24, 2023

Waupaca (which park it will be held at is to be determined)

August 8-12, 2023

National AVVA Convention, Orlando, Florida

September 23, 2023

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

December 1-2, 2023

Wisconsin State Council holiday party (location TBD) 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!



Joy L. Foye

Wisconsin AVVA At-Large Representative