

VVA National Board Report of
Conference of State Council Presidents

Silver Spring, Maryland

April 19, 2024

Yesterday (April 18, 2024) the conference met with 41 state council presidents in attendance. These represented chapters and state councils from Alaska to Puerto Rico and many states in between.

We met our new lobbyist, James L. McCormick, who noted several legislative initiatives he intended to pursue. We also discussed the past practice of VVA members visiting the Capitol in mass and of resuming the past practice of our state council presidents visiting the Congress during the conference period.

We discussed the legacy task force and Jack Devine's plans starting at the chapter level.

We entertained a discussion of recognizing our Laotian brothers and Mgone soldiers, unrecognized allies especially as participants in the CIA war against North Vietnam during our war. A plan is being formulated to obtain VA benefits for these now US citizens similar to that currently working for our Korean brothers.

We discussed spousal abuse that was reported in the January Board conference and board meetings and the VA's recent direction that Vet Centers and the VA no longer are authorized to provide counseling and assistance to non-veteran spouses. The conference reiterated that the VA needed to change this policy to allow spousal abuse victims by veteran spouses' comfort and assistance. We discussed getting the benefits and Healthcare committees energized in this endeavor.

We discussed our appellate program recently approved by the National Board and the appointment of VVA Veteran Service Officers.

We noted the National fidelity insurance program obviated the need for state councils and chapters to seek coverage for our fiduciary officers as required by the VVA Constitution. This was at the National Treasurer's direction. Possible Constitutional amendment forthcoming in New Orleans convention, 2025.

We approved an updated and revised CSCP Welcome Guide for newly appointed state council presidents and serving alternates. It will be posted on the web.

We discussed stolen valor and how chapters and state councils might address such an issue. It is a pernicious act that can be handled in different ways depending on the severity of the practice, the individual involved, and how it either does or might affect the integrity of our associations.

We noted that in the upcoming political climate, in adopting or espousing any political position, we must abide by the procedures and guideline of Sections 3 G, 3 H, and 3 I of Article IV of our VVA Constitution.

Our state council presidents reported on many varied Vietnam Veterans Day celebrations—parades, ceremonies, and almost universal events honoring our efforts and deceased during the Vietnam War. We read lists of our state's Vietnam War dead sometimes such readings lasting hours. We visited Indian reservations where some had never heard of agent orange or about rights of dependent survivors; we participated as honor guards in over 175 funerals; we worked in the development and expansion of veterans' homes; in just one state, in one month we served 33,000 pounds of food for the needy; we celebrated chapter anniversaries; we worked identification and subsequent burials of unidentified veteran remains; our Michigan VSO's got \$1,620, 311 in VA benefits for veterans; in Louisiana they raised \$80,000 one night for homeless vets; we helped in the recovery of damages by a fire that covered 1.3 million acres in West Texas to include capturing and helping animals who hoofs were burned and taking them to area veterinarians for care. We are just now, in at least five states, are starting to affiliate with the DAR for our legacy, history, and future. No longer are we able to do some of the things that required heavy lifting such as building ramps for disabled vets but we are transitioning to what we are more capable of doing such as serving the poor and caring for our disenfranchised fellow vets. We congregate, tell war stories, and it's no wonder we are growing.

Many do not want the mantle of leadership. Contested elections are not usual. We do, however step up as we are sorely needed. We are a strong and viable organization. We may be old, a bit frail, but we are the Vietnam Veterans of America.

Respectfully submitted, Samuel T Brick, Chair