



Together Always

**AVVA - AT LARGE NEWSLETTER
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Happy Holidays!. We had a very nice dinner on Friday evening followed by our usual fun at the white elephant gift exchange following the dinner. Here are my notes for the December 3, 2022 quarterly Wisconsin State Council meeting in Waupaca and the AVVA meeting that immediately followed.

AVVA Report

Pat gave her report to the State Council:

- AVVA Region 6 Director, Rick Talford, has resigned; Barbara Coan, the Region 6 Deputy Director, has assumed the position.
- By-law change submissions for the August 2023 AVVA National Convention are due by 4/1/23. Contact Pat with any questions, concerns, and/or suggestions.

AVVA Meeting

Pat distributed copies of the by-laws and provided her suggestions for by-law changes at the 2023 National Convention. The following suggestions were discussed; members provided their input.

- Article III – Members, Section 3.02.c Membership: Eliminate dual membership for VVA members. The consensus was the dual membership wording can be removed, allowing VVA members to have more options in serving AVVA. Pat will write up the wording and send it to AVVA Chapter and At Large representatives for additional input.
- 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. We have previously discussed this. We would like to see this changed to reflect VVA's policy allowing a specific process for a Chapter to "authorize" another Chapter to vote on their behalf at National Conventions.
- Article VIII – Chapters, Section 8.03 Incorporated Chapters: Wording specifies who incorporated AVVA Chapters report to, depending on whether or not their state is incorporated. Pat will write up changes to the wording and send it to AVVA Chapter and At Large representatives for additional input.
- Article VIII – Chapters, Section 8.04 Delegate of Record: Currently indicates the Convention delegate must be from the same Chapter as they were appointed by; this will need to be changed if Article III, Section 3.07.b is amended so the 2 articles are not in conflict.
- 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 difference between "may" and "shall" was discussed; "may" is a "suggestion" while "shall" is a requirement. This would ensure the Board of Directors cannot change the bylaws without the consent of 2/3 of the delegates at the National convention.
- Article IV – Board of Directors, Section 4.01 General: The current wording reads "The board shall have full power and authority over the affairs of the Corporation between the annual meetings." Concerns were expressed, based on wording in Article X, that Board members would have the ability to make changes to bylaws without the consent of the general membership. Changes to both Article IV and Articles X should be reviewed together since they appear to be closely related to each other.

State Council Notes

Guest Speaker – Dan Buttrey, Milwaukee County War Memorial

- Dan Buttrey, an Iraqi veteran, spoke to our group about the Memorial (warmemorialcenter.org) and their mission to “Honor the dead – serve the living”, including through education programs.
- The Milwaukee War Memorial organization was established in 1944 following the end of World War II. Construction for the building began in 195; it was dedicated on Veterans Day in 1957.
- The building was designed by Eero Saarinen, an American architect whose other designs included the St. Louis Arch, JFK Airport and the Dulles International Airport.
- The Wisconsin Medal of Honor Exhibit (medalofhonorwis.com) is the first of 2 new permanent exhibits at the War Memorial. The exhibit honors all the Wisconsin Medal of Honor recipients. They are currently working to upgrade Lieutenant Ellen Ainsworth, the first female to receive a silver star, to a Medal of Honor recipient. The second will be for POW/MIA’s; it will be the first permanent POW/MIA exhibit in the country and will feature Richard Bong.
- The theme for 2023 will be the 50th anniversary of the Viet Nam war, “POW’s Coming Home” (1/27/1973, Paris Peace Accords signed; the US exits Vietnam).

President’s Report – Mike Demske

- The color Guard from Oconomowoc was recognized for their representation of the Wisconsin State Council at The Wall in Washington on Veterans Day.
- Jack McManus supports Agent Orange/Toxic Exposure town halls as a major objective of VVA and to emphasize the difference between Memorial Day and Veterans Day to the general population.

Treasurer’s Report – Pat Craney

- The WSC still has cash in the bank; report accepted as presented (motion; seconded; approved).

Vice President’s Report – Dan Sciuti

- Dan discussed his attendance at the 6th annual Veterans Bonanza in LaCrosse on November 5, 2022. and provided at the quarterly meeting. Vendors at the event included insurance companies, employment agencies, Medicare and VA support organizations. The handout listed 13 of the vendors at the Veterans Bonanzas: VA Caregiver Support; 2-1-1; Minnesota State Veterans Cemeteries; VETSNET (Wisconsin Veterans Network); Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs; Veterans Administration; Veterans Crisis Line; VA-Community Care; Delta Dental (Veterans Affair Dental Insurance Program); Can Do Canines (Assistance Dogs); Homes for Heroes; Inclusive - Home Modification; and Project Healing Water Fly Fishing.

Secretary’s Report – Jim Mullarkey

- A number of election and financial report submissions are missing; please submit them to Jim ASAP.
- Jim reminded everyone that when an obituary is sent to National, and to him, he researches the veteran, writes an obituary, then puts it on the vvawi.org site under the “In Memoriam” tab. Please contact Jim if you have anything you would like to have included in the website obituary.
- Jim asked anyone who hasn’t already done so to complete the survey (at vvawi.org) for Dr. Whittle’s PTSD research project. Please share this with any Vietnam and/or Vietnam Era veterans you know (even if they are not VVA members).
- Send reports and anything you would like included in the vvawi.org calendar to Jim via e-mail.
- The meeting schedule for 2023 was discussed; corrections were made to previously published information as needed. Finalized meeting dates are: March 18, June 24, September 23 and December 2, 2023. All meetings, except June 24, will be held at Comfort Inn and Suites, Waupaca. The annual Christmas party will be held on December 1, at 6:00 PM. Hotel rooms may be reserved for Friday and Saturday nights at Comfort Inn and Suites (rates are \$99/night plus taxes).
- If you move, notify National to continue receiving your copy of The Veteran. The change of address form can be found at vva.org.
- If you wish to have your status as a veteran included on your driver’s license, you must go through the Wisconsin DMV; your County Veterans Service Officer can help you with starting the paperwork.

Region 6 Director – John Margowski

- John discussed the most recent National Board meeting.

- Jack McManus discussed VVA's legacy. He emphasized Chapters should stress "what it means to be an American" when doing school presentations.
- Veterans Voice of America (a 501(c)3) possibly taking over open VVA claims was discussed. The veteran must approve the transfer of any claim from VVA to Veterans Voice of America. Transferring claims would occur only if/when Veterans Voice of America becomes accredited.
- VVA is NOT recommending **ANY** attorney nor is it able to "endorse" one. However, VVA and Bergmann and Moore have reached a Memorandum of Understanding regarding filing Camp LeJeune claims. A veteran can file a claim through the VA but a family member cannot since they are not a veteran; the family member may want to consider filing through an attorney. Bergmann and Moore have agreed to discuss what options the veteran has on filing a Camp LeJeune claim.
- Please re-read the Working Group I report. A Resolution and Constitution Committee will be formed to restructure and streamline VVA; more details will be provided as they are available.
- Town Halls were discussed. It is important to have a County Veteran Service Officer (CVSO) there and that the CSVO be familiar with the PACT Act to answer questions from attendees.
- When attending the National Convention, all delegates should read all proposed amendments. It is very beneficial to attend committee meetings and bring up questions there before the amendments are brought to the floor at the Convention.

National At Large Director – Richard Lindbeck

- Richard reinforced that Jack McManus wants to see VVA go back to its "roots".
- Aircraft carriers have been removed from the blue water navy designation.
- The VA did a study on toxic exposure to sarin gas which affects only the reproductive system. They are now questioning their own research on the topic.
- If a veteran files a Camp LeJeune claim with other than the VA, the attorney fees and commission percentage and potential offsets can substantially reduce the final amount the veteran receives.
- The Minority Affairs Committee is looking at how to get more Native Americans to join VVA and how to help incarcerated veterans re-integrate when they are released from prison.
- We need to make sure Toxic Exposure and the PACT Act are discussed in the next Congress.
- VVA membership dates have been changed for in-country veterans only to 11/1/1955 to 5/7/1975. Richard recommends using the new application form at vva.org since it includes the new dates.
- Senators Baldwin and Collins have introduced a bill to provide health care for reserve members called up for active duty.

Veterans Affairs Committee/Council of Veterans Programs – Vern Larson

- Vern's next Committee meeting is scheduled for December 15th.
- Vern discussed not for profit (\$125,000 each) and entrepreneurial grants (\$100,000 each); entrepreneurial applicants must be new/innovative groups. All grant recipients are 501(c)3's and must serve veterans; grants are being reviewed for distribution. Vern can be the point of contact if anyone has questions.
- The MIA bill needs our support; we need to lobby our legislators to support the bill.

Committee Reports

Legislative – Dan Sciuti

Legislative activity was limited since mid-term elections were occurring. The following items are worth repeating; copies of the Acts can be found at vva.org. Contact your senators and urge them to support these Acts.

- The Major Richard Starr Act (S 344): Allows veterans with a combat-related disability and less than 20 years of service to receive both retirement pay and disability compensation without reduction.
- The Camp LeJeune Justice Act (CLJA): VVA's National Board signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Bergmann and Moore to offer screening services to VVA members, their friends, and families to advise them on whether or not filing a CLJA claim is in their best interests.

Agent Orange Committee

- The Committee recommended the State Council make a donation to the Appleton Chapter for its upcoming Town Hall meeting on April 29, 2023. The motion came out of committee so no 2nd was needed; the motion was passed.

POW/MIA Report – Duane Canon

- Duane provided the current number of POW/MIA's by conflict for Wisconsin and on a national level.

Old Business:

2023 calendar: All meetings will be in Waupaca; the June meeting will be at a local park (exact location to be determined).

New Business:

Richard Lindbeck made a motion to send a donation to the Florida State Council for the latest hurricane; 2nd by Vern Larson; motion passed without objection.

For The Good of the Order:

- Pat Furno distributed a Milwaukee Journal article about a homeless Vietnam veteran whose body was found in the Wausau area.
- Mike Demske shared that several members of Veterans Voice of America are former VVA National employees.
- Richard Lindbeck reminded everyone that to be seated as a delegate at the 2023 National Conference, all Chapter financial and election reports must be submitted to, and received by, National prior to the Convention.
- Regions 1 and 4 have Directors; Regions 2 and 3 currently do not.
- As requested, a map of Wisconsin showing Chapters and Regions will be added to vvawi.org.

Upcoming Events:

March 18, 2023

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

June 24, 2023

Waupaca (exact location to be determined)

September 23, 2023

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

December 1-2, 2023

Wisconsin State Council holiday gathering (location to be determined) 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 Merry Christmas and a Happy and healthy New Year!



Joy L. Foye

Wisconsin AVVA At-Large Representative