



Vietnam Veterans of America

Wisconsin State Council

Unapproved Minutes

VVA WSC First Quarter Minutes

March 16, 2024

Waupaca, WI

9:00 am VVA Chapter 351 (Appleton) presented their mobile education *locker* before the WSC Quarterly meeting. The *locker* which was partially physical and partially virtual is part of what they use in presentations in schools and elsewhere.

Many of those in attendance had questions about how they started, the equipment and materials, the average number of presentations in a year, and more.

The WSC delegates and AVVA members present were extremely appreciative of their commitment and the presentation.

10:00 am The meeting was called to order at 10:13 AM by President Mike Demske. The pledge of allegiance was recited. Duane Canon (#437) did the invocation.

Secretary Mullarkey discussed the new sign-in sheet which now includes a column for “delegate”. He requested a valid e-mail be used; if you don’t have an e-mail address, use a valid one of a spouse, chapter member, etc.

President Demske ordered the taking of the roll. Secretary Mullarkey proceeded with the roll call. VVA Chapters 0005, 0101, 0206, 0224, 0236, 0256, 0324, 0331, 0351, 0425, 0437, 0448, 0479, 0635, 0729, 0731, 1130, and At-Large (70 percent). AVVA was represented from VVA Chapters: 0005, 0331, 0351, 0437, 0635, and At-Large. The Secretary called a quorum.

The President appointed John Margowski (0425) parliamentarian and Richard Lindbeck (0448) as timekeeper.

The agenda was amended to include the AVVA meeting immediately following the WSC meeting. Jim Mullarkey (0425) moved to approve the agenda. Ver Larson (0635) seconded the motion which was approved without objection.

John Margowski (0425) moved to approve the Minutes from the September, and December 2, 2023 meetings; Duane Canon (0437) seconded; approved without objection.

President's Report – Mike Demske

Richard Lindbeck, John Margowski, Jim Mullarkey (Chair), Pat Furno (Advisor), and I am members of the **WSC Constitution Committee** which will work on procedures regarding the dissolution of VVA.

1. The Committee requested input from Chapters on what they want to see happen when National is dissolved. Do Chapters want the Wisconsin State Council to continue after the dissolution? Do Chapters want to continue after the dissolution? (refer to 3)
2. John Willman (#479) requested information on the national dissolution be added to vvawi.org. John Margowski shared that National's attorneys are still working with the State of New York so no information will be available until those discussions are completed.
3. Jim Mullarkey recommended Chapters wait until the National dissolution process is completed before they begin any VVA Chapter dissolution process. The State Council will work with Madison on State processes/procedures when appropriate. Secretary Mullarkey requested a show of hands on how many Chapters want to remain an organization (most Chapters want to remain an organization; however, two Chapters are struggling to maintain their Chapter charter due to a lack of members and member participation.

Mike thanked the Appleton Chapter (0351) for presenting their mobile education locker before this meeting. The locker is part of what the VVA Chapter uses in presentations made to schools and elsewhere.

Since Mike Demske has been a member for 37 years, Mike asked John Margowski to read the letter from VVA President Jack McManus celebrating the **40th Anniversary of the Wisconsin State Council**. [40th Anniversary citation will be placed on the first page of the WSC website – vvawi.org]

Vice-President's Report – Dan Sciuti

The only item Dan had was that he would not be running for re-election as Vice President. He encouraged anyone interested in the position to run.

Treasurer's Report – Pat Craney

Pat reported the State Council had more income than expenses during the last quarter.

Secretary's Report – Jim Mullarkey

Jim thanked all the Chapters who submitted their financial reports for FY 22 and 23. He also requested Chapters to submit/resubmit their election reports; especially page 3 which only goes to the WSC. Be sure to include officers and delegates/alternate delegates with direct email addresses or email addresses where officers, delegates, and alternates can receive the information sent via email to ensure information gets to the Chapters and its members. If a Chapter officer (the President and Secretary automatically receive the information) is not receiving the information, or you want more Chapter members to receive the information, send Jim the names and e-mail addresses you want added to his list.

The calculation of the number of delegates each Chapter is allotted at WSC meetings is currently included in the WSC by-laws. This will need to be changed since that information is in the State Constitution, resulting in duplication of information.

Region 6 Director – John Margowski

The Veterans Benefits Committee has completed the approval of grant applications. The Department of Veterans Affairs needs to make sure they are processing **Caregivers Grant** applications properly. Currently, 90% of Vietnam veterans' applications are being denied while almost all post-911 applications are being approved; it is important to determine why this discrepancy is occurring.

Although there are over 35,470 homeless veterans, the VA is closing many homeless programs with no VA per diem.

The National Constitution indicates an elections committee is optional; Chapters **must** select a presiding officer to run elections even if that person is running for election or re-election.

Chapters need to review their membership rosters and make a list of all deceased members including their membership number and send it to Nicole Kennedy at the National Membership Department. National will be hiring an outside group to review and “clean up” their rosters to remove deceased members.

National At Large Director Report – Richard Lindbeck

Bergman and Moore are the veterans benefits attorneys who will be handling claims appeals (there are currently a total of 600); they expect to have all the appeals resolved by 7/31/24. All 8 attorneys who were previously handling the appeals were fired; they were only processing 1 claim per month and weren't meeting the standards established in their contracts saving approximately \$1 million.

This year (2024) is the last year that Chapters will receive a membership “rebate” from National. Since National will be paying an outside organization to remove deceased members from their rosters, it will save money if Chapters submit updated information. When completing the form listing deceased members, you don't need a separate form for each person; you can use a single form to list all of them. A surviving spouse can continue to receive “**The Veteran**” by having the VVA Chapter or the surviving spouse notify VVA National [(301)585-4000] or membership [(301)585-400 Ext 120] that they want to continue receiving “**The Veteran**”. Remember there is an annual cost of \$20.00 for **The Veteran** which can be paid by the VVA Chapter or the surviving spouse.

7,000 claims in Puerto Rico haven't been processed (some have been sitting for over 15 years) but are expected to be processed within a few months. President McManus will be going to Puerto Rico to ensure these long overdue claims will be taken care of in a more timely manner.

Over 1 million Agent Orange samples that must be moved are still at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. The Air Force will move the samples (stored in freezers) but it is unknown yet who will pay for moving them.

The Leadership Conference this year will have many of the same topics/speakers as in the past and maybe the last year due to the prohibitive cost of holding it.

The 2025 National Convention in New Orleans may be the last one due to decreasing attendance and overall cost. The 2025 Convention won't be cancelled; the contract has already been signed and it could cost as much as \$2 million to cancel it.

VVA currently has 91,053 members who served in the military from 1955 – 1975.

Do not use the attorneys who advertise on TV to file a Camp Lejeune claim; they can charge 50% of the settlement vs 25% charged by VVA-approved attorneys. Although some TV attorneys have been told to “cease and desist”, they continue to handle claims; talk to your CVSO for a list of “approved attorneys”.

G. Pauline (of Iowa) is the new Assistant At Large Director.

Regional Reports:

Region 1:

Region 2:

Region 3: [Duane Canon](#) – Duane encouraged any Chapters in his region who would like him to visit to contact him.

Region 4: Greg Foye – no report.

At Large: Greg Foye – no report.

AVVA Report – Pat Furno

There will be an AVVA meeting immediately following the State Council meeting.

It was reported at the January 2024 AVVA Board of Directors meeting that AVVA President Sharon Hobbs and VVA President Jack McManus are working together on AVVA becoming VVA’s legacy, beginning with incarcerated veterans. Some AVVA members are also working on taking over some VVA committee duties.

Some veterans have become caregivers for their spouses but they are not being compensated as a caregiver. [VVA and AVVA are exploring caretaker options not presently covered in VA guidelines.]

Committee Reports:

POW/MIA Report – Duane Canon

Duane provided updated information on MIA/KIA numbers for World War II, Korea and Vietnam. Richard Lindbeck shared that 400 bodies of servicemembers from Vietnam are at the bottom of the South China Sea and will never be recovered.

Legislative – Dan Sciuti

Dan highlighted several items from his report; the full report will be at vvawi.org

VVA President Jack McManus testified before the Joint House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee encouraging Congress to: pass the Donut Dollies Congressional Gold Medal Act (H.R. 3592); hold an oversight committee hearing on the Toxic Exposure Research Act; call for research on pre-Gulf War burn pit use, including all veterans who were exposed to any toxicants and are still waiting for answers as to their long-term effects; maintain close oversight of the implementation of the PACT Act; pass the Major Richard Star Act (H.R. 1282/S. 344); enact legislation reinstating the 48-hour VSO-review period for disability claims; enact legislation prohibiting the reduction of VA disability compensation for incarcerated veterans; and, act to ensure that a reciprocity agreement with South Korea is entered into immediately.

The Medal of Honor Day is celebrated on March 25 of each year. The definition of the Medal of Honor reads, in part, “Whereas the Medal of Honor is the highest distinction that can be

awarded by the president, in the name of the congress, to members of the armed forces who have distinguished themselves conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of their lives above and beyond the call of duty ... Whereas public awareness of the importance of the Medal of Honor has declined in recent years; and Whereas the designation of National Medal of Honor Day will focus the efforts of national, State, and local organizations striving to foster public appreciation and recognition of Medal of Honor recipients." Wisconsin currently has 3 living Medal of Honor recipients.

Specific Philips CPAP machines provided by the VA have been recalled. Since it involves very specific models, for the latest VA information on this recall, go to Philips CAPA and BiLevel PAP Recall. **The cutoff date for the recall is August 9th.** One of the meeting attendees shared that the new INSPIRE devices may be an option; the VA may cover the cost under certain circumstances, however, Medicare and/or a Medicare supplement may pay for it. Keep in mind that getting a CPAP machine involves a process and, therefore, will take time.

Mike Demske also shared that Senator Jon Tester (Montana) has introduced [S.3958](#) to require the Interagency Working Group on Toxic Exposure to conduct research on the diagnosis and treatment of health conditions of descendants of individuals exposed to toxic substances while serving as members of the Armed Forces, and for other purposes; Marco Rubio (Florida) is a co-sponsor.

Veterans Affairs Committee/Council on Veterans Programs – Vern Larson

Vern reported on the status of various bills.

The following bills were passed and signed into law:

- Act 70 added 3 representatives from student organizations to the Council on Veterans Programs (COVP) Board (UW system representative, technical college representative, and independent/private college representative);
- Act 69 designated and marking the entire route of State Highway 80 as the Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial Highway; and
- Act 102, Amendment 1 removed the authority of the Veterans Affairs to approve construction on the grounds of Camp Randall Memorial Park (including the 12-15 acres of the Veterans Memorial Park) for purposes of the new athletic training facility (the University Board of Regents and the Athletics Department made the decision; the entire process took about 2 weeks).

The following bills were passed and are waiting to be sent to the Governor:

- SB 546 allows admission of spouses to Wisconsin veterans homes if the veteran is not already admitted (current state law requires the veteran to be a resident before the spouse can be admitted);
- SB 633 designates and marks I-90 from the Minnesota/Wisconsin state line in LaCrosse County to the intersection of I-90 and I-94 in Monroe County as the Ho-Chunk World War II Code Talkers Memorial Highway; and
- SB 383 which allows Hmong soldiers who fought in Laos in support of U.S. forces to indicate his/her *veteran* status on a Wisconsin operator's license or identification card.

The following bill passed one house of the Legislature: AB102/SB102 reduces the eligibility threshold to claim the veterans and surviving spouse's property tax credit from 100% to 70%.

Authors of the bill are looking at amendments that would limit this bill to certain income groups in order to lessen the impact to local governments. The bill was passed by the Assembly (96-0), approved by a Senate committee (6-2) but did not get put on the agenda before the Senate adjourned. The attached amendments included a maximum income of \$75,000 for singles or \$150,000 for married couples and a maximum home value of around \$300,000. The bill will be brought back again next year.

Friday, April 5th is Veterans Recognition Day at VFW Post 305 in Eau Claire (1300 Starr Avenue). They will have 5 guest speakers including Gary Wetzel – US Army Medal of Honor Recipient, John “Trapper” Schultz (US Army Ret.) – past Wisconsin VFW State Commander, James Bond – WDVVA Secretary, and Lieutenant Nao Shoua Xiong – Wisconsin Lao Veterans of America, Inc., Vets Center, and CSVVO’s.

May 18th is the Armed Forces Day open house at Fort McCoy.

Make sure you continue to call your [legislators](#) about bills that are important to you.

Chapter Reports:

Duane Canon (#437) reported their Chapter received their 35th-anniversary certificate.

No other verbal Chapter reports were given.

Old Business:

- No old business.

New Business:

John Margowski (#425) shared there is a new Agent Orange locations exposure list which includes 7 states in the United States. You can search Google for the 2/9/24 press release or use the following link: <https://news.va.gov/press-room/va-presumes-exposure-agent-orange-herbicides/>.

John Margowski (#425) made a motion to change the WSC by-laws to meet only 2 times per year in March and September. In an election year, WSC would also meet in June to conduct elections, swear in officers, and adjourn for a social gathering. The changes would take effect in 2025. The WSC attendance requirement by-laws must also be amended. The motion will be discussed again at the June meeting with the final vote on the motion to be taken at the September meeting. The motion was seconded by Frank Mueller (#448); the motion passed without objection.

John Margowski (#425) requested President Demske appoint an Awards Committee, including setting up an awards nomination form. A request was made for volunteers to Chair and serve on the Committee. Vern Larson (# 635) volunteered to be the Chair, Greg Bloch (#635), Ray Brooks (#425) and Pat Furno (AVVA) volunteered to serve on the Committee.

John Margowski (#425) requested volunteers to join him on the elections committee; Richard Lindbeck (#448) and Greg Foye (At Large) volunteered. If you are interested in running for office, please let [John](#) know by e-mail (1jmargowski@gmail.com) or U.S. Postal Service:

John Margowski
W132S6930 Fennimore Ln.
Muskego, WI. 53150

The [officer descriptions](#) can be found on the National VVA website (vva.org).

Jim Mullarkey asked if there was an interest in including a Zoom option for future meetings. The consensus was that it could be tried at the September meeting and see how it works. A question was asked if members could vote over Zoom; the answer was yes. The link for any Zoom meetings will be included on vvawi.org

No 50/50 raffle was held.

Motion by Richard Lindbeck (#448) to adjourn; 2nd by John Willman (#479); motion approved.

The meeting adjourned at 12:20.

Respectfully submitted,

James E. Mullarkey

James E. Mullarkey
VVA WSC Secretary

Joy Foy

Joy Foy
AVVA At Large/WSC Associate Secretary