



Together Always

**AVVA - AT LARGE NEWSLETTER
VOLUME 27
JUNE 2024**

I hope your summer is going well. Here are my notes from the June 22, 2024 quarterly Wisconsin State Council meeting in Waupaca; the meeting was moved to Par 4 Comfort Suites due to inclement weather. There was no separate AVVA meeting.

State Council Notes

John Margowski (#425) requested a correction to the March meeting minutes. The correction is the 2nd paragraph under New Business (regarding changing the number of yearly meetings) to: “The motion will be discussed again at the June meeting with the final vote on the motion to be taken at the ~~September~~ June meeting”. Correction passed without objection.

Elections Committee Chair John Margowski and Committee member Richard Lindbeck advised the delegates that there were no candidates for the offices of President and Vice President, only for Secretary and Treasurer. According to National rules, if a State Council does not have a President and Vice President, it must be dissolved. The formal meeting was recessed for 15 minutes so delegates could discuss among themselves how to proceed and to determine if candidates could be found for the open positions. Before John and Richard left the room for the discussions, they reminded everyone that the President’s position requires attendance at 3 meetings in Washington, DC (with expenses paid by National and the Wisconsin State Council). John and Richard also advised they will help whoever is elected as President since they have both held the position in the past. Candidates for the open positions came forward during the recess. The meeting reconvened.

Elections were held with the following results:

President	Tom Banner
Vice President	Frank Mueller
Secretary	Jim Mullarkey
Treasurer	Pat Craney
Region 1 Director	Tom Banner
Region 2 Director	Mike Johnson
Region 3 Director	Dan Scuti
Region 4 Director	Greg Foye
At Large Director	Greg Foye

All officers and regional directors were sworn in. President Banner re-appointed Richard Lindbeck as Executive Director. A motion was made, and passed, to thank all former officers and regional directors for their service to the State Council.

President’s Report – Richard Lindbeck

Mike had an excused absence; Richard gave his report.

- Richard thanked Mike Demske for his many years of service and expressed the unanimous sentiment of that Mike’s presence will be missed. We all wish Mike improved health and hope that at some point in the future he will be able to attend a State Council meeting (Mike can no longer live alone and has moved to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan to live with his son).

- Richard moved that all past Regional Directors, officers and/or Board members be thanked for their service. Motion passed unanimously.
- The new president, Tom Banner shared his e-mail (TGBanner@yahoo.com) and cell number (262-498-3712) with the group; he prefers to be contacted by text.

Vice President's Report – Dan Sciuti

- No Report

Secretary's Report – Jim Mullarkey

- Jim used Chapter 92 as an example to discuss the format of the Election Financial report listing. The "Chapter" column shows "92-1", with the "-1" being the number of State Council meetings the Chapter has attended. The "Election" column shows 23-25-3N, the "3" means Jim has a copy of the information on page 3 and the "N" means National has received the report. The "Financial" column shows "23-24" which means the Chapter has turned in their financial reports for 2023 and 2024.
- "Article III Members" of the State Council Bylaws, "twenty-five members" is changed to "fifteen members".
- Chapter 220 (Madison) wasn't listed on the Reports; they no longer exist.
- How were Wisconsin Regional boundaries decided? When the State Council was formed, Highway 51 (now US 51-I 39) and Highway 29 were the dividing lines. A request was made to add Chapter locations to vvawi.org; for example, Chapter 479, Central Wisconsin, is in the Wausau/Marathon County area. Jim will update the website.
- Jim discussed several items on the vvawi.org website.
 1. The "contact us" and/or "chat" features go directly to Jim.
 2. Jim does NOT receive a copy of deceased member information that is sent to National. If Jim doesn't receive information from a Chapter, he searches for information to put on the "In Memoriam" section of the website; please feel free to send Jim obituaries, personal recollections, etc. for inclusion.
 3. Jim discussed the "headings" on the top of the first page of the website ("Home", "VVA,WSC, AVVA" and "WSC Information"), including the types of information found under each heading.
 4. Scholarship winner information is added to the website **after** the scholarships have been given out.
 5. It was asked if anything is added to the website when a Medal of Honor recipient passes or remains are returned and funerals are held for them. Jim will add that information to vvawi.org (probably on the Home page), if he is aware of it happening.

Treasurer's Report – Pat Furno

- Pat Craney had an excused absence; Pat Furno asked if there were any questions on the quarterly report. There were none.

Region 6 Director – John Margowski

John spoke about the National Board meeting on 4/19/24. He provides a summary after each meeting for posting to vvawi.org. John encouraged everyone to visit the website regularly to remain informed.

- The Puerto Rico claim backlog is being addressed and will be resolved.
- VVA veteran's benefits have been approved but 90% of caregivers requests are still being denied.
- John encouraged all Region 6 members to attend the Leadership Conference scheduled for August 20-24 in Reno, Nevada since it may be the last one.
- VVA membership is 91,285 (AVVA is 10,858). Annual report forms for National have been revised and page 3 is now gone; new forms can be found at vva.org.
- Wisconsin is a leader in removing deceased members from their rosters.
- John answered several questions from delegates.
 1. The last year for rebates may be 2025; it will be reviewed yearly for potential future funding.
 2. Don't use the attorneys who advertise on TV for Camp LeJeune Toxic Exposure claims; file through the VA (including your CVSO and/or a veterans organization Service Officer) instead.
 3. Toxic Exposure at Fort McClellan was also discussed.
- Staffing issues at VA facilities was discussed. Vern Larson (#635) advised that admissions are on hold due to inadequate staffing. Vern believes the VA needs to better address training, mentoring, etc. to recruit and/or retain staff.

National At Large Director Report – Richard Lindbeck

- Richard attended a Vietnam Veterans Day ceremony in Necedah. There were about 25-30 Vietnam veterans at the ceremony but none of them had heard of VVA; he gave them start-up kits.

- Richard reported that Mike Demske, John Margowski and himself attended the National Board meeting. Scott DeArman, Chair of the Elections Committee, met with Richard about updating National's forms for National Conventions. Someone asked why National isn't using the QR code for registration; that is being worked on. In 2022, the years of service for eligibility to join VVA were changed to **1955-1975**.
- Richard attended the Michigan State Council meeting in Marquette on 5/31 - 6/1. The meeting was small but included a very moving speech by a Michigan Medal of Honor recipient and a very moving flag disposal ceremony. The current total of Vietnam Medal of Honor recipients is 78, the largest of any conflict.
- Richard shared that only 3 veterans are currently serving in the U. S. House of Representatives.

AVVA Report – Pat Furno

- Pat shared that she ran unopposed for the State Representative position and was re-elected by acclamation.
- The 2024 Reno Leadership Conference theme is “The Aging Veteran”.
- The 2025 National Convention will be held in New Orleans and may be the last one. Pat encouraged as many AVVA members as possible to attend the Convention.
- Pat reminded everyone to ask politicians running for office about their stance on veterans issues. VVA President McManus has a list of suggested questions at vva.org.

Scholarship Report:

None

Awards Committee – Vern Larson

- Vern Larson, Pat Craney and Greg Bloch were the committee members. Guidelines for the awards, as suggested by the Committee, were distributed and discussed. Guidelines include:
 1. All award nominees must be members of VVA.
 2. The Distinguished Service Award can consist of multiple people.
 3. The VVA Member of the Year Award, if given, is based on names submitted for the Distinguished Service Award. This is a special award that requires letters of support.
 4. Submission and award presentation dates were discussed. The Committee will review the suggestions and bring information back to the delegates at our next meeting.
 5. Since the motion came out of Committee, a second to approve the guidelines was not needed; motion passed unanimously.

Veterans Affairs Committee/Council on Veterans Programs – Vern Larson

Vern reported on the status of Act 102 which removed the ability of the Board of Veterans Affairs to be included on decisions regarding the Camp Randall Veterans Memorial Park. Vern had a handout on the stakeholder meetings for the proposed changes.

- The Replacement Project was included in the budget in July 2023. The Project formally began in February 2024; in March 2024, Act 102 was approved and a design/build project listening session was held. It is expected the project will take about 3 years to complete; six (6) stakeholder listening sessions were held around the state from March through mid-May.
- UW-Madison proposed a plan to honor veterans in the Camp Randall Practice Facility Design by creating a Camp Randall veterans memorial plaza, naming wall and architectural touches, incorporating a Civil War motif (it was an Army base and POW camp during the Civil War). Service flags and/or symbols will be on the building and tribute will be paid to the Grand Army of the Republic. A partnership with the Veterans Museum is being explored as well as a commitment to collaborating with veterans on the design.
- There will be one-time funding (\$300,000 - \$400,000) and annual funding (\$55,000 per year) to honor student veterans and support student officer education; the funds will come from the University budget.
- There will also be recognition of military service in athletics and beyond with a one-time funding of \$3,000 and \$60,000 per year for 5 years (for a total of \$300,000); the \$60,000 will support the UW-Missing-in-Action Recovery and Identification Project.

Old Business:

- The motion by John Margowski (#425) to change the by-laws to reduce the number of annual meetings from 4 to 2 (3 in election years) was discussed. The motion was passed and will take effect beginning in 2025.

New Business:

- Tom Banner shared he visited Vietnam in April of this year and will bring slides to our next meeting to contrast the difference(s) between North and South Vietnam (Saigon, Mekong Delta).

- Jim Mullarkey distributed a handout for MyVote Wisconsin (a non-partisan group) that provides information on the voting process in the upcoming election(s). Their website is: myvote.wi.gov and includes information on national as well as state races. Please share the information with your chapters.

Upcoming Events:

August 20-24, 2023

AVVA Leadership Conference, Reno Nevada

September 21, 2024

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

December 6-7, 2024

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 number so I can return your call). Any suggestions on what/how much information to include in this newsletter is always appreciated.



Joy L. Foye

Wisconsin AVVA At-Large Representative