

**ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
COMFORT INN, BISMARCK ND**

May 15, 2025
8:00 AM

Meeting called to order at 1:00pm by Chairman Murray Strom. Pledge of Allegiance and a Moment of Silence observed for POW/MIAs.

ACOVA Roll Call:

Present:

Brian Bartlett	Trish Hodny (TEAMS)	Tom Ryan
Joe Best	Lamar Kruckenberg	Cynthia Schlosser
Jim Hapala	Vernon Laning	Murray Strom
Dave Hilleren	Gary Maddock	Hal Weninger (TEAMS)

Absent:

Steven Anderson – Excused	Jim Verwey – Excused
Jacob Volk	

Guests:

Chairman Strom asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

Motion to approve Agenda by Vernon Laning, 2nd by Tom Ryan. Motion carried unanimously.

ND DVA Report – Commissioner Lonnie Wangen

Updates on Department's activities.

Changes discussed in SB 2025 as they apply to the Commissioner, Veterans Home Administrator and Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs. Senate Bill 2025 is the Department of Veterans Affairs budget bill.

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ND National Guard: Major Jay Sheldon

Updates on mobilizations. Talked about bills that were passed in the Legislative Session.

ND Cares: Michelle Gauvin-Panos, Director

Updates given on ND Cares activities. North Dakota Military data book contains information on demographics.

VAHCS-Fargo: Rodney Gellner, Interim Director

VA in Fargo is a 5 Star facility. Ribbon cutting in Williston and Dickinson for CBOCs. Telehealth is now in two communities in western ND, [ATLAS and VHRC Locations | Telehealth VA](#)

The VA has identified a site in Fargo for a Fisher House. They are still working on obtaining it.

Job Service ND: Jerome Billups-director DVOP & LVRS

Report given on employment services for ND Veterans.

ND Assoc. of County & Tribal Veterans Service Officers; Chris Deery, President, Cass County VSO

State Training Conference in Fargo. HB1169 was really about consumer protection for veterans. The Commissioner did an excellent job during the Legislative Session. Veterans are calling into his office with concerns about their benefits and access to the VA.

ND Veterans Home Governing Board, Vernon Laning, Chair

There is a vacancy on the Board. Vernon's term is up and he would be available to serve another term if needed. He deferred to Veterans Home Administrator for a report.

ND Veterans Home: Dane Grebel, Administrator

Skilled care is full, there is currently a waiting list. Basic Care has 66 individuals. The Veterans Home 2025-2027 Budget contains equity money for nursing staff. Hopefully, this will help retain some employees. There are always nursing staffing issues at the Home.

The Governing Board meeting is set for Thursday, May 22nd. The Veterans Home Foundation Golf Tournament is on Friday, June 6th.

Clarification given on donating to the Veterans Home or to the Veterans Home Foundation. If you donate to the Veterans Home, it's best to designate where the money should be spent, i.e. activities, furniture, furnishings.

Committee recessed for subcommittee meetings.

Committee reconvened at 1:45pm

Chairman Strom opened the meeting.

Motion by Vernon Laning to accept February 2025 minutes, second by Dave Hilleren. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion on next meeting:

By Committee consent, the next meeting will be held on September 18 & 19, 2025 at the Comfort Inn, Bismarck ND.

Chairman Strom spoke on the ND Veterans Governing Board

Motion by Joe Best to appoint Vern Laning, Curt Twete and Dave Peterson to the ND Veterans Governing Board, second by Brian Bartlett. Motion approved unanimously.

Veterans Affairs Subcommittee – report by Joe Best, Secretary
Vern Laning, Chairman.

Motion by Joe Best to raise the Veterans Aid Loan from \$5,000 to \$8,000 (Policy 200 and Policy 230) to be effective August 1, 2025, second by Vern Laning. Motion passed unanimously.

Fund 410 grants and funds available were reviewed. Subcommittee recommends the Department cash a CD at the end of June 2025 to continue operating the Grant Program at the start of the 2025-2027 Biennium.

Reviewed the Veterans Aid Loan Program, 2023-2025 report looking good. Studied the ND DVA 2023-2025 Budget as of March 31, 2025, it appears to be satisfactory. The 2025 Audit of FY23 and FY 24 have no formal recommendations.

Motion by Joe Best to accept subcommittee report including the Department cashing a CD to start the 2025-2027 biennium, second by Lamar Kruckenberg. Motion passed.

Legislative Subcommittee – report by Brian Bartlett, Chairman.

Trish Hodny asked about the 50% gaming tax to go to the PWTF- HB1504.

Thanked Lamar for his serving on ACOVA

Motion by Brian Bartlett to accept the report as presented, second by Lamar Kruckenberg. Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Strom asked for a motion for the Commissioner to receive legislative raises.
Motion by Brian Bartlett for the Commissioner to receive legislative raises for the 2025-2027 Biennium, second by Tom Ryan. Motion passed unanimously.

PWTF & Appeals Subcommittee

PWTF Subcommittee – report by Dave Hilleren, Secretary

Reviewed status of PWTF 410 clearing account. Reviewed financial documents pertaining to the PWTF. The subcommittee recommends Veteran's Gaming Tax (50% be allowed go to the PWTF) be a priority for the next legislative session. There are no requests for PWTF dollars.

Motion by Dave Hilleren to accept PWTF report as presented, second by Vern Laning. Motion carried unanimously.

Appeals Subcommittee – report by Dave Hilleren

No appeals.

Motion by Dave Hilleren to accept Appeals report as presented, second by Gary Maddock. Motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Strom reminded committee members that the speakers were live streamed and were also recorded.

Roundtable Discussion:

Hal Weninger: Glad to be able to attend the meeting and is hoping to be back home by July 4th.

Trish Hodny: Appreciated being able to attend by TEAMS. It's been a pleasure serving with all of you.

Cathy Halgunseth: Appreciated the one-day meeting since it's been busy lately with the legislative session and the audit. It is a good idea to invite people to the next meeting to clarify the intent and changes made regarding the ACOVA.

Dan Thorstad: Live streaming had some technical problems to start but seemed to be ok after that. A recording will be uploaded.

Lonnie Wangen: Appreciated working with a lot of people at the session. A lot of bills that we supported were passed.

Vern Laning: This is my last meeting, I enjoyed the time on the Committee. He will now be working more with Dane (Veterans Home).

Cynthia Schlosser: As a new member it's been a continuous learning experience. I appreciate everyone's patience and help with understanding everything.

Dane Grebel: Appreciate working with everyone. Thank you all for your service.

Tom Ryan: Really like all the reports given and speakers' comments. Overall, everything went well and he learned a lot. He's looking forward to the next meeting.

Jim Hapala: Still learning and hopes to stay around a few more years. Thanked everyone for all they do.

Joe Best: Appreciates being on the Committee. He is always learning something new.

Mamie Havelka: Thank you for having me as a guest. The more you know, the more you don't know. Its important committee work and thank you all for you do.

Lamar Kruckenberg: It's my last meeting. Appreciates the work the Committee does. Good luck to everyone.

Dave Hilleren: Meetings have been progressing along, with legislative session and now this meeting. Canadian Vietnam Veterans Windsor, Ontario retiring travelling wall.

Gary Maddock: He has been on the Committee for seven years. It was very intimidating when he first started. He's very glad to have served on the committee.

Lamar Kruckenberg talked about his experience of going on an Honor Flight and encourages veterans to go if they haven't gone yet.

Brian Bartlett: Thanked everyone who has served on the Committee. Thanked the Commissioner for everything he did at the Legislative Session. AMVETS State Convention starts tomorrow. AMVETS Steele Club will pay for a companion going with someone on an Honor Flight.

Murry Strom: Thanked everyone who served on the Committee.

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Tom Ryan congratulated Lamar Kruckenberg on becoming DAV State Commander.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted:

Jim Verwey
Secretary