

NORTH DAKOTA VETERANS COORDINATING COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MARCH 1991 MEETING

The North Dakota Veterans Coordinating Council met March 5, 1991 at the AMVETS Club in Bismarck. President Ken Evenson called the meeting to order informally for instructions prior to going to the Capitol to attend hearings on veterans legislation. The Council would attend the hearing on SCR4021, the Flag amendment, at 10:00 am in the Prairie Room. They would then return to the AMVETS Club for lunch prior to the regular Council meeting at 1:00 pm.

The regular March meeting of the North Dakota Veterans Coordinating Council was called to order at 1:02 pm at the Bismarck AMVETS Club by President Kenneth M. Evenson. President Evenson introduced John Adolf who would be replacing Gayle Syverson as an AMVET Legislative representative. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and a moment of silence held for our POW/MIAs and others.

Roll Call

American Legion

Cmdr. Curtis Twete - present
Adj. Vern Useldinger - present

Rep. Earl Redlin - absent

Disabled American Veterans

Cmdr. Julius Wedman - present
Adj. Robert Hannah represented by
Jerome Krejci
Rep. Lloyd D. Halvorson - present

Veterans of Foreign Wars

Cmdr. Bernard Beach represented by
Aldon Georgeson
Adj/QM Ray Stelmachuk - absent
Rep. Jerome Bixby - absent

AMVETS

Cmdr. Ken Evenson - present

Adj. Elmer Ekern - present
Rep. Vigo Pedersen - present

Council and Resource Members: VVA President Larry Senger, absent; WWI Cmdr. Floyd Henderson, absent; American Ex-POW Cmdr. Russell Christianson, absent; NDACOVA Chair Bernie Wagner, present; Comm. Milt Kane, present; Commandant Frank Gathman represented by Chuck Godke; VETS Leo Swenson represented by Dennis Moch; AG A.P. Macdonald, absent; DVA Director Donald Colston, absent; PIO Dave Schmidt, absent; NDCVSO Pres. John Meyer represented by Dennis Berg; AmLeg SO John Berge, absent; VFW SO Chuck Barstad, absent; DAV SO Greg Seurer, absent.

Honorary Auxiliary Members: American Legion Pres. Lyla Semenko, absent; DAV Auxiliary Cmdr. Sophie Beutler, absent; VFW Auxiliary Pres. Mavis Kukes, absent; AMVETS Auxiliary Pres. Dotty Evenson represented by Nancy Hildebrand.

Legislative Committee Members: Leo Swenson, absent; Joseph Smith, present; Duke Ellingson, present; Richard Ryan, present; Al Georgeson, present; Walter Dockter, absent; Joe OBrien, present; John Adolf, present.

Also present was Joe Novak, Legislative Liaison Director.

Reading of Minutes - Motion by Halvorson, second by Wedman to suspend with the reading. Question was raised if Al Georgeson was a voting member for VFW. After some discussion it was decided that it was the intention of Commander Beach to have Georgeson as his representative and that a quorum was present to conduct business. Motion to suspend with reading of the minutes carried.

Treasurer's Report: Beginning balance - \$2,921.17; Income - none;

disbursements - \$478.04; closing balance - \$2,443.13. Motion by Useldinger, second by Wedman to accept the report, carried.

Bills: Ekern had a postage bill of \$3.52 for mixed stamps. Motion by Twete to pay the bill, second by Useldinger, carried.

Pres. Evenson commented on changing the meeting to March 5 when the VFW was meeting in Washington; all Department Commanders were present when the time and place was changed. Also, the agenda may not have been mailed to all. Gen. Macdonald would be coming at 2:30 pm. Asked that we give all our support to our legislative workers.

Communications - Letter from Earl Redlin, Dotty Evenson, who would be absent. Colston's report would be read under agency reports.

Agency Reports

Bernie Wagner stated a written report would be submitted on activities of Committee representatives from each organization. New nominations would be called for soon. Some meetings were held at Home, others by conference call which would be used in future. Would hold reorganization meeting in July. Agency Bill 1009 was being handled by them and they asked for continued support.

Chuck Godke reported on the Veterans Home subcommittee. They hope to occupy the Special Care unit in September. During construction 17 beds are down, have 114 residents and 9 on leave. Need donations for equipment and outfitting rooms. Al Georgeson asked if they would have a ribbon cutting. They may have an open house in late September.

Milt Kane reported on DVA and agency legislation. A representative from the governor's office would be at the meeting at 3:00 pm to discuss an amendment the governor wanted made to HB1091. HB1106 to include getting and spending trust fund money passed. HB1142 concerning veterans grievance hearings passed. HB1190 concerned military buy back for retirement purposes. HB1330 for increased compensation for conservators was killed. Death certificates - Had been filed with Bureau of Vital Statistics, not now. Dropped in 1975. Perhaps should get legislation to do this again. State Health Department felt they were only clerks. Desert Storm Support Groups - being addressed by many around state. Soldiers and Sailors Relief Act - needs updating. Business is heavy in Department. Concerned about legislation and budget.

Bernie stated a hearing would be held for a veteran wanting residence at the Home. Milt stated a new service officer, Emil Ressler, had been hired in Richland County. Pres. Evenson questioned if the July meeting could be held at the Home. Godke did not feel the work would be done by that time.

Dennis Mock spoke for Veterans Employment and Training and Job Service. Delimitating date for Vietnam era veterans is Dec. 31, 1991, but Congress working to change date to 1994. Job Service is meeting all mandated performance standards. Providing service for veterans needs and will now be watching for those coming out.

VA Center Director Donald Colston sent along a report that was read to the Council. They have recruited doctors due to vacancies from Desert Storm and also looking to fill nursing positions. Outreach initiative would place abuse counseling in Bismarck and Grand Forks and focus on Indian health. POW Remembrance Day will be April 9. Other vacancies filled are for work study

and fiduciary accounts and a counseling psychologist or two. The 14 southwest counties have been returned to the Fargo office for fee basis jurisdiction.

Dennis Berg represented the County Veterans Service Officers and stated the spring conference would be held March 25-27 at the Bismarck Comfort Inn. Milt said no agenda was ready yet because so many changes would have to be made. Conference runs from noon Monday to noon Wednesday.

Al Georgeson had some appointment calendars to give away. The Auxiliaries had no reports to make.

Legislative Reports

President Evenson thanked the Legislative Committee people and others who have been at the Capitol working for veterans legislation. He called on Commander Twete to make his comments on the hearing on HCR4021. Twete stated that it was apparent the Flag amendment was not a cut and dried issue. We should be contacting our representatives. Had hopes it could be voted on in the House while we were in Bismarck but time seemed to be short. Pres. Evenson then asked for comments on each bill of concern to veterans.

HB1009 - Bernie said the bill was being received well; veterans post war trust fund money and general fund money would be used to fund the Department of Veterans Affairs and Veterans Home.

HB1088 - Joe Smith said this cemetery bill had passed both houses. There are no appropriations, any monies or donations must be used for it.

HB1091 - Was to be bypassed but OBrien asked to discuss it now before the governor's representative comes and again at that time. OBrien stated that it first passed the committee 14-1 but after an amendment it came out 11-4 "do pass". It passed the House 94-9. Has been in limbo in the Senate since then. Governor's amendment to the bill came up this morning. Kane asked to suspend further discussion until all other bills had been discussed.

HB1106 - Passed by committee March 5 by 6-0.

HB1142 - Passed both houses. Curt asked if we needed to be concerned if this or any bill would be vetoed. Ken questioned how long the governor could sit on a bill. Some said 10 days, some 14. Apparently he can sign, veto or let it become law without his signature. Council needs a good lesson on state legislative law.

HB1190 - In hearing at this hour.

HB1293 - Smith said it was in Senate committee. Milt said it was introduced by senator for constituent, had five sponsors.

HB3028 - Passed without hearings.

Joe Novak asked if all knew the history on HCR4027. He went through its steps from original conception to date. Bonuses were paid for WWII, Korea and Vietnam. A constitutional change would be needed to pay bonuses to Persian gulf veterans. Cost of living since previous bonuses would set bonus at about \$50 for non-theater, \$100 for in-theater. Need coordination between Council and Guard on what the Guard position may be. Would get their position when A/G Macdonald appears. Could be problem of determining what is in-theater. Question on how to fund - taxes or general fund? Lloyd Halvorson felt we may be premature on a bonus as far as trying to set any cost. Vern stated that WWI vets got \$25/mo. Joe felt we should act now to set some standards because people forget easily and the flags won't always be flying like now.

Motion by Julius Wedman to pursue the concept of SCR4027, second by Curt Twete, carried.

General Macdonald appeared before the Council. His first comments were on the state cemetery. The sump is in, the pump will be installed in the spring. Lincoln-Oakes Nursery will seed it to grass. They got another \$100,000 from the National Guard Bureau. Have received special written permission to take anything needed from John Moses hospital chapel. The \$100,000 must be used for things to train the Guard, need more donated dollars. Got \$5,250 grant from MDU for three years running. Plan mailing to individuals of all organizations. Need monies for a trust fund to maintain the cemetery. A dedication is planned for next year - 1992. Would like to have someone from each war interred there by dedication time. Will have section for memorials and cremations. Joe Novak asked what response there was from veterans organizations. Some are speaking against it but hopefully this will disappear when the cemetery is completed. Vern asked what design the chapel would have. Some pictures were passed around. It would be the internment center but probably called the chapel. Halvorson asked what arrangements could be done now. A "pre-registration" will be available; need only a DD214. Costs? A little to veterans, more to spouses. This is not a National cemetery. White upright marble markers will be used, vet's name on front, spouse on back. They will follow the rules of the national cemeteries.

General Macdonald's comments on SCR4027. Had met with house and senate majority and minority leadership. Anyone called up eligible (900 from ND, about 800 in Gulf area). Dollar amount? Previous bonuses were \$12.50 and \$17.50; cost of living would be more like \$50 and \$100 for in-theatre. Bill says only those called and in-theatre. State side regulars would not qualify. Time would be from August 2, 1990 until the last day set by the President. Flat \$2,500 would be paid to Purple Heart recipients and KIAs. Attorney believes the Guard and Reserve can be paid without a constitutional amendment but amendment needed to pay for regular military on active duty. Cost estimated at one million dollars for Guard and Reserves; another million for active duty military who would be paid in 1993.

Twete asked if veterans of Panama, Granada and Lebanon would be included. The additional cost would be small. Felt it would be difficult to exclude those veterans. General suggested committee meet with legislative leaders if this is the wish of the Council.

Discussion was held on who were KIAs, Purple Heart recipients, qualifications of "friendly fire" vs "hostile fire".

Previous motion to pursue SCR4027 was tabled.

Brian Rhode, administrative assistant to the governor, was presented. The speaker presented a proposed amendment to HB1091 that came from the governor. The governor is concerned about the status of minorities and women in state government. A employees survey showed that only 14% of employees making over \$30,000 in state government are women. Governor thinks veterans preference is a roadblock to women's equity. Amendment would give combat veterans (wartime) preference for 10 years; non-combat for five years.

Much discussion was held on the amendment. Moch gave a good background on federal law and why the federal government does not have a delimitating date for veterans preference. Questioned if women veterans would lose

preference to other women. Rhode quoted some federal law but it was pointed out that this was for the Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Act, not regular veterans preference. Rhode said the governor wanted to make more opportunities for minorities and women. It was mentioned that there is a lot of opportunity for minorities and women in the service. Halvorson said it appeared the governor wanted to do away with veterans preference period.

Rhode said they wanted to have a more level playing field. Novak said he would like to see that happen, that all affirmative action, etc., be eliminated in favor of merit. Rhode said those drafted in wartime were uprooted while present day military are volunteers. It was pointed out that things can change as sudden as Desert Storm for these military people.

Ekern stated that 10 year delimitating date would eliminate veterans preference for wartime veterans except possibly for Desert Storm. The five years would eliminate most other veterans because most join the service for education benefits and if they went to college for four or five years after service they would have no time left to use veterans preference. He questioned how many women compared to men were hired for entry level jobs. \$30,000 jobs are not entry level jobs. He pointed out that since 1975 about 14% of the military are women who would benefit by the original HB1091.

Halvorson pointed out that most of those looking for veterans preference would be Vietnam, post-Vietnam and Persian Gulf. He wanted to know how many women have actually been denied jobs because of veterans preference.

Rhode said women don't apply for many types of jobs. Ekern asked how they could blame that on veterans. Twete said many women got there jobs because of veterans preference. He questioned if 50% of the females wanted to be placed in each job classification.

Rhode said the amendment would be offered to Sen. Matern's committee in the morning. He said the governor would favor veterans preference for combat veterans only, not non-combat veterans. Many said they served during wartime but not in combat, that it took 10 people to keep one on the line. General Macdonald questioned if veterans preference should be given to military retirees. Rhode said the governor was going to try to get agencies to work harder to hire women and minorities. Pres. Evenson said we needed better figures from the state government agencies to show where women and minorities are being denied employment because of veterans preference. Mr. Rhode thanked the Council for having him there.

Motion by Twete that the Coordinating Council go on record opposing the amendment to HB1091 as prepared by the legislative council staff for Senator Matern, second by Halvorson, carried.

Motion by Twete that the Coordinating Council support HB1091 as presented and to contact the legislative chairman, second by Useldinger, carried.

Motion by Twete to support the proposals of General Macdonald for SCR4027 with the exception that it also include Panama, Grenada and Lebanon, second by Halvorson, carried.

The new proposals would be substituted for the original SCR4027 and presented to the Senate Constitutional Revision committee. Try to have the leadership delay the bill.

New Business

Secretary read organization verification for each organization.

NDVCC 6

American Legion: 27,790 members, 227 Posts, state convention June 15-18, Williston; national convention Aug 30-Sept 5, Phoenix, AZ.

VFW: 14,223 members, 71 Posts, state convention June 7-9, West Fargo; national convention Aug 16-23, New Orleans.

DAV: 3,998 members, 10 Chapters, state convention April 25-27, Kelly Inn, Fargo; national convention July 27-Aug 1, New Orleans.

AMVETS: 2,319 members, 11 Posts, state convention June 21-23, Fargo; national convention Aug 10-17, Louisville, KY.

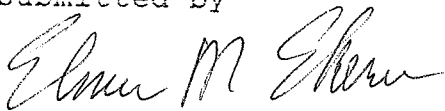
Vern mentioned that legislative representatives should have some reimbursement for lunches, etc. when contacting legislators. Joe OBrien said they should present their bills at the July meeting. Motion by Useldinger that legislative committee representatives be reimbursed for coffee expenses, etc., for legislators during the session, second by Wedman, carried.

Time and Place

The next meeting will be held Monday, July 15, 1991. This is the annual reorganizational meeting and dues are due from each voting organization. The meeting will start at 9:00 am at Camp Grafton with the Chieftain in Carrington as second choice. Ekern would contact Col. Dean Hildebrandt and CWO Al Tabor about the use of Camp Grafton. The Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs would meet at noon on Sunday to noon Monday at the same location as the NDVCC.

Everyone was asked to meet at the Capitol cafeteria at 8:00 am. The meeting was adjourned by President Evenson.

Submitted by



Elmer M. Ekern
Secretary/Treasurer