

Illinois Veterans Advisory Council – Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, December 14, 2022– 10:00am

Illinois Department of Affairs

WebEx

Attendance:

NAME	APPOINTED BY	PRESENT
	Marine Corps League	
	IDVA Director	
Al Reynolds	Disabled American Veterans	X
Senator Tony Munoz	President of Senate	
Senator Sue Rezin	Minority Leader of Senate	X
Rep. Lance Yednock	Speaker of the House	X
Rep. Dan Swanson	Minority Leader of the House	X
Bill Wolff	IDVA Director	X
Frank Gutierrez	IDVA Director	X
Megan Everett	IDVA Director	
Vince Long	IDVA Director	X
Command Sgt. Maj. Dena Ballowe	National Guard	
Shannon Yount	Attorney General	X
Nathan Maddox	IL Secretary of State	
Jorge Bermudez/Rich Wuthrich	IL Department of Securities	X
	The American Legion	
Keith Wetherell	AMVETS	X
Peggy Arick	Blue Star Mothers of America	X
Tim Kennedy	Catholic War Veterans	X
Dr. Jerry Field	Jewish War Veterans	X
Joe Schaler	Military Order of the Purple Heart	X
Michael Peck	Military Order of the World Wars	X
Ray Dieter	Reserve Officers' Association	X
John Murray	IACVAC	
Justin Miller	Veterans of Foreign Wars	
Roy Dolgos	Vietnam Veterans of America	
Kevin Wathen	IDVA Director	X
Bob Tyler	MOAA	X
Senator Craig Wilcox	DSTF Position	X

New Members:

Guests: Dutch DeGroot

Call to Order 10:00am

Roll Call

Pledge of Allegiance

Moment of Silence

Introductions:

IDVA Staff:

Terry Prince, Director

Melissa Black, Chief of Staff

Crystal Womack, Senior Program & Policy Advisor

Kourtney Hopkins, Senior Programs Manager / Women Vet's Coordinator

Maureen Hartigan, Public Information Officer

Jenny Franklin – Director's Assistant

Connie Watson – Grants

Gwen Diehl – Homes Projects

Sara Augustinas – Legislative Liaison

Mark Patterson – Field Services Manager

Danielle Luevano – Operations & Programs Manager

Anthony Vaughn – Assistant Director

Angie Simmons – Homes Administrator

Approval of September 14th, 2022, minutes

Motion to approve the Minutes by Al Reynolds

Vince Long seconded the motion

Chairman Mike Peck:

You should have all received a copy of my chairman remarks. I just want to thank everyone for their cooperation in the past 2 years. It's been up and down year for us 2 years, but we did accomplish a great deal and I especially want to commend Jerry Fields for his work in trying to get the emergency service people qualified for state certification.

I've asked the chairman of the house Veterans Affairs Committee to speak with this morning. All I can say is that as a marine she stood her polls until 3am on the last day of the general assembly, and we have a bill approved that we spent 4 years trying to approve. That was the amendment to the Standard Homestead Exemption to include surviving spouses. Representative Kifowit if you're available, would you go ahead and give your report please.

Representative Stephanie Kifowit:

Thank you for the introduction, we did pass Bill 1975, which included helping out the widows of our veterans who are disabled, and who had passed away. There was a loophole that we needed to fix and we were able to get that through. It was not 3 am, it was like, 1030 PM then it went over to the Senate, and then it passed the Senate close to midnight. What we are working on right now with Senator Wilcox is the follow up legislation for the Military Veterans Assistant Act. We are going to file it as an amendment in the Senate so that it only has to come back to the house for concurrence. However, the bill in the Senate is still in what they call assignment. So, we can't put the amendment on it. I filed a new bill just so that everybody can read the language and that's HB5853. We don't expect 5853 to move, but we needed to get the language out there so that folks like you and IDVA and other stakeholders had a chance to read the language that we were proposing. So that is the current bill 5853 as filed.

This is the follow up bill that we promised to come with regards to oversight, as we've heard throughout the state, there's been court cases between VAC's and counties. There's been questionable activities and some of the VAC's and the like, and so what we're looking at is oversight. So this bill primarily gives oversight to the attorney general in the event that the state's attorney is either biased, or feels like they should not be a party to the dispute. It also talks about remediation and arbitration. So this bill is really a follow up to the bill that's listed in your in your report. I think it was 5184 was the VAC bill that passed and it signed into law. So what this does is it allows authorized reimbursement to an officer. It also talks a little bit about the congressionally chartered organization. We trimmed down that definition that so it's formed by and for veterans and has a membership of at least 15 individuals, and it provides responsible aid assistance services to the veteran community. And then section 2 is what's important to me in this is it says the purpose of the 2nd part is to provide in accordance with the section just and necessary assistance. Now, this is important, just and necessary assistance and services to military veterans. The reason why this is important is because in this bill, the AG's office has the authority to oversee this section 2. So if a county is not allowing the VAC to provide just and necessary assistance and services military veterans, then they could go to the attorney general and file a complaint or have the attorney general come in and arbitrate this section here, which I think is very important. Now, the VAC has to justify the just and necessary assistance and services so they can't be going to like Florida or some warm place and just unnecessary. But so there has to be some checks and balances there for the AG. This is a huge issue with VAC's and funding and being able to provide services for our veterans.

We also put in there that the VAC has to provide a copy of a report annually to the president of the chairman of the county board, and should be made available online. So that's a big thing. Just to allow some communication between the VAC and the county. So that they can't say that they're not communicating. We talk a little bit about the commission and representatives on the commission. The superintendent of the veterans assistant commission selected appointed or hired by the commission is an at will employee who shall be answerable to and shall report to the commission. This just provides structure and clearly defined role. As for the superintendent we also state veterans assistants commissions shall establish and maintain bylaws that outline the framework policies and procedures for conducting the business of commission. Many commissions do have bylaws, but there's some that don't quite have bylaws. We also

put in there that the commissions have to follow the applicable policies that are already established in place by the respective county. This includes policies related to compensation and employee rights, adopt policies, such as the structure what we have, regarding anti-aggressive policies and all those policies need to be adopted by the VAC's as well.

We talked a little bit about no warrant authorized under ISAC may be issued for payment of money without the presentation of an itemized payment for a claim approved by the superintendent of the commissioner report to the full commission membership. There has been some talk how some things in some contracts have been entered into, without the commission knowing. This is another accountability piece that we're looking into.

I'm not going to go over pages 13 and 14, you all can read that. That's language from the AG talking about violations. Pages 15 and 16 talks about the AG's office again. It's mostly language from the AG that oversees what would happen if there's an infraction, the AG's remedies and those kind of things. Vacancies outlined a process for vacancies. Then we're talking about what the county shall provide. The county shall provide all necessary furnishings that was already existing law. We just cleaned up that language. Supplies, services, including, but not limited to human resources and payroll support, information, technology, services and equipment, telephone services, printing services, postage, liability, insurances. And so then we also put in there that the county shall also provide to the employees of the commission, all benefits available to county employees benefits offered through Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund, health life and dental insurance, workers compensation insurance, employee contributions, and cost of these benefits. Now, these costs may come from the commission budget. So, we're not telling the county has to bear the cost, we're just saying that it makes sense if you have a VAC of 4 people that they just be lumped into the counties payroll and services and then they can be charged back to VAC the if the county deems that's something that can be worked out. That's why it's a may and not a shall because some counties just absorb it and some counties charge it back, so we didn't want to be restrictive with regard to that.

What we all also did in this legislation, we talked about employees from among military veterans, including those who have served, or may still be serving as members of the Illinois National Guard, or a reserve component of the armed forces of the United States and who did not receive a bad conduct or dishonorable discharge or other equivalent discharge thereof, or their spouses surviving spouse or children. This just says that the superintendent we want them to choose from this list. Obviously they can choose from other folks if they deem didn't necessary as a superintendent. This is a may and as far as possible. If nobody applies except for John Doe down the street that has no connection at all whatsoever to the military and the superintendent says it's applicable, then they can, they can hire them as well. But we just want them to focus on that subsection first of veterans and spouses.

Then other than that, this does preempt home rules so we would need 71 votes to vote for it. That is because we want it throughout the whole state of Illinois with no exceptions in the state. So that's the current law. I had a meeting with Senator Wilcox. This is expected to move in lame duck. So, again, this is expected to be put on a house

Bill that's sitting in the Senate. So when Senator Wilcox affixes it to that bill, all it has to do is go through the Senate and then come back to the house for concurrence. So we don't have to read it 3 times into the record into the house, 3 times in the record in the Senate, and then that would not be possible and lame duck.

So that's where that bill sits right now. You've probably gone over in the chairman's report that the Medal of Honor Highway was established, which was really exciting. We're still working with the director and his staff on the dental care for veterans. We're going to be working on trying to put together a pilot program. We have put a 1 Million dollars in the budget for dental care assistance in our veteran homes. There's a little glitch in the wording that was in the budget. So, we haven't implemented that yet, but I'm told by staff that it might be put in the supplemental that we might be considering in lame duck.

I'm not sure if you guys ever discussed Illinois Joining Forces, but that legislation to kind of realign and establish best practices for that public private partnership is on the 3rd reading in the Senate and that is to pass in lame duck as well.

I can talk about a whole lot more for the next hour and a half, but that's the short summary of the current bill that addresses the military veterans assistants act.

Chairman Mike Peck:

All right, well, thank you very much. You have time for questions?

Representative Stephanie Kifowit:

Absolutely.

All the counties are included. It preempts home rules so that home rule counties cannot make their own laws, contrary to what this says in this law.

Anthony Vaughn:

Does this slot define what the VAC's must do?

Representative Stephanie Kifowit:

Under number 2, they must provide just and necessary assistance and services to military veterans who served in the armed forces and who's discharged from the service was honorable or general under honorable condition to the families of deceased veterans. It goes out to define a little bit more after that. So, section 2 defines it roughly in that manner.

Unknown Speaker:

I unfortunately, for the veteran resistance commission of county, we have the largest populations in the country. We're underfunded and understaffed. We don't provide any benefits whatsoever to our employees. They're severely underpaid as well. And I am just curious if the county is not 100% obligated to absorb the additional costs. I don't think that with our current budget, we would be able to either.

Representative Stephanie Kifowit:

Now this law hasn't passed yet, but that's where this law comes into effect. If you can't come to agreement with Cook County to provide the just and necessary services for the veterans in Cook County, which is an enormous number of veterans, you know hundreds of thousands of veterans in county and you can't come to an agreement, that once this is passed you can bring that grievance to the attorney general's office and the attorney general will try to mitigate it or rule on that. In this legislation, like compensation policies. So if they have a step or a compensation schedule, then you're under this legislation if passed then your place would fall under that step or schedule as well for compensation and benefits. And if they are going to charge you back for benefits that you're not budgeted for then you can argumentatively say that you cannot provide the just and unnecessary services for the veterans because the county is underfunding and not providing. I have had conversations with Elizabeth in her new role and we're going to follow up on that, but I did bring that up when I saw her in Springfield.

Senator Wilcox:

This is Senator Wilcox to that question. I just want to reiterate, we did not change the underlying statute. So if county has not been funding the county VAC to the levels that the federal law requires, that's why bills came to fruition. To summarize and address the rub between VAC's and the counties and to help the counties understand what their responsibilities and funding requirements have always been. We did not change those portions of federal law. We just reiterated them in these bills.

Representative Yednock:

Representative Kifowit and maybe Senator Wilcox, I have 2 questions about this and I know we could talk about it in committee but the the question came to me about, is this going to give a little too much license to a VAC to dictate their salary and benefit terms, or can they say with this change that, hey you know what, we all want to make X amount of dollars and, you know, you're just gonna have to fund this. Is there something that limits that? We can't have them in control with too much of what the counties are willing to budget.

Second question would be, in any of the statute existing or this. I'm frustrated sometimes when with my local VAC's, when I have a veteran that needs some assistance and someone that's handicapped or can't readily just get in a car and drive to the VAC center. I live out in rural territory where it's a long way to anything and they say, well, we can't help them unless they get here. And I say, well, you're being paid to help veterans out. There is 4 or 5 of you, why are you not going to his house or their house to help them out. Is there anything in our statute that if we're paying them to assist veterans. So those are my 2 questions.

Representative Stephanie Kifowit:

I would say to the 2nd question, the superintendent is responsible to the VAC board. The VAC board needs to be more informed of what's going on. In this legislation, that communication is kind of renumerated. What they're telling that veteran is false, because I can tell you, when I filed my claims, it was all through phone calls. Then I got an Express Mail from the VAC and I signed it and I expressed it back. So you don't have to do anything in person. You can sign the documents at home. So, that is just being disingenuous to the veteran. There's a way to do it without forcing a veteran to come

into the office. What we're doing is, we're not micromanaging how the VAC runs, but we are empowering the board a bit more of that commission so that the board is more informed of what's going on and how they're meeting the just and necessary services, which that VAC would then after this passes be in violation of section 2. Somebody could lodge a complaint with the attorney general if they're not providing just and necessary services needed for the veterans.

To the 1st point, the funding mechanism never changed. There has always been a base funding mechanism that the counties are obligated to fund at. Counties in the past have just forgotten that this is in the statute and have kind of dictated to the VAC's a budget that they have to work around. All we did in this budget, in the previous legislation that passed got signed into law. We remphasize that this is in law and we emphasize that it's up to the VAC's to present their budget and that they could present less than this based funding level in law, but they have to justify that it meets the just and necessary requirement in existing law. Also, that they need to fund properly. So your 1st question was already addressed in the prior legislation that got signed into law.

Senator Wilcox:

I'll add this has been one of the big rubs between VAC's and counties. The counties have always wished the VAC to be part of the county when it worked for the county and then not part of the county when it didn't work. In other words, most of the time you'll find the VAC employees at an equivalent level to the county employees are paid less and the counties have often said, well, you're not county employees, you don't get into our compensation plan. That's been one of the basis of many of the lawsuits. So, if the commission uses the county's compensation and benefits plan, identifies job descriptions, and finds that equivalent position that should act as the cap.

Representative Yednock:

Okay, very good. I appreciate the information Senator Wilcox and Representative Kifowit and thank you and Mr. Peck that is my question. Thank you for calling on me.

Sara Augustinas:

Just to clarify with Representative Kifowit and Senator Wilcox in 5184, which will be effective on January 1. That minimum that's established is the .02 but you may do the .03 of the property value. How many counties weren't meeting this? Just anecdotally, did we have a guess at how many counties weren't funding appropriately this was just a reiteration and a reinforcement that how many were kind of at fault.

Representative Kifowit:

I don't think to be quite honest and this is just my from discussion. I don't think any county was funding at that higher level. And some VAC's said we don't need to fund at that higher level to meet the needs of our county. I would venture to guess, and it's just a guess that the counties weren't following that at all is my assumption. I don't know, Senator Wilcox, but in my conversations with a lot of VAC's they weren't at that threshold.

Senator Wilcox:

I'm going to anecdotally say, not a single county in this country. He has ever funded it at the .02%.

John Murray:

You have a 100 counties in Illinois and we have about 50 VAC's and none of them are at .02, not even to think about .03. Like the Sentaor Wilcox and Representative Kifowit said the counties VAC's have been underfunded forever. This law is huge, they need to be recognized. They need to be accountable and we need to move forward.

Representative Kifowit:

And that was reiterated in the prior bill that goes into effect January 1, like, was said, so this is just a clean up language. Thanks, John.

Chairman Peck:

Any other questions for the Representative? Thank you for appearing today and talking to us. I give great credit to you Senator Wilcox and Representative Yednock because as we fight for Nevada for number 4 is the veterans friendly state.. Thank you very much.

Director of Princ, are you ready you sir?

Director Prince:

I'm really excited to be here and appreciate all of you joining, and certainly those that are here in person here in Chicago and in Springfield or anywhere that you've dialed in. I'm going to try to keep it brief because we've got a lot of folks and I want to tell you about what exciting things are happening at IDVA. I'll finish with some personal comments.

We are making a difference Mr. Chair, working together with the IVAC and we're coming out of an election. We're really excited about rolling into a new year and really setting up our strategic plan for 2023 to 2027. Some big focus areas, in fact, this afternoon for the committees information, we're meeting with our portfolio, Sol Florez and those guys to kind of see what the portfolio is going to look like so that we can ensure that our goals are aligned to theirs, but also, let them know some of the things we're going to be working on. I was sharing some of this early with Dutch, who was nice enough to show up a little early and I got to bend his ear about our mission vision and guiding principles and what that's going to look like. I will be rolling that out to the IVAC probably in January for your review. But it kind of goes along the lines of things that you've heard me talk about before in really making a difference in the lives of veterans and their families.

Proud to say that I've got the final draft of the Veteran Service Related Ailments Task Force in my hands here. I'm going to be putting eyes to this over the next couple of days, and getting it back to Kourtney Hopkins who has done yeoman's work to say the least for all the squids in the room. Gold medal for her and the team as they have come together to extract this product out of the people who were working on it and many of you were on this. This is very important to us as we plan our future, certainly outreach to historically underserved and ignored veterans as an area of focus for this organization. We understand and Dutch, and I were talking about this and gone over the days we're going to have the perfect veteran stroll into our office and say, I'm here for help. We've

got to go get them and this is step 1 and a bigger thing that goes to funding that we're going to need, expansion that we're going to need.

We are very excited about our relationships Mr. Chair with our county veterans assistants commission partners and the things that we've been able to do just in the short time.

Finally, my eternal thanks to you and Dr. Field for your support when I first got here. We had a lot of work to do. We were in a crisis and make no mistake about it, I wouldn't be sitting in this job if we didn't have an issue, but you have been an amazing force. Not just yourselves, but the entire board, our elected officials. One of the things that we promised early on was that we were going to be completely transparent with each other. If we got a problem, let's get it out there and we can solve the problem together. And I have found this state in this organization to just be fantastic at that. I want to Thank you for your hard work. You and Jerry specifically, taking on the difficult role of being the chair and the vice chair of the IVAC. Trying to get everybody together in covid and get everybody on the same page and hearing those arguments. I don't think we can thank you enough. We wanted to have a big celebration of a parade down Michigan Avenue but you are in Florida! You've got Rep. Kifowit to the office thinking you'd be here. She didn't come here for me. She came here for you. So that was you and Dr. Field! We would like to thank you properly for your service and really just kind of say, thanks from all of us in Illinois. I don't know where we would be without the cooperation of you and the way that you put this committee together. For all of you, I'm really excited about what we're going to be doing in 2023 and beyond. I want to wish all of you a happy holiday season, the best of health and wellness as we move into next year. So, with that being said, I can go on all day literally, but I've got a bunch of amazing people at IDVA and I want to tell you some of the things that are going on in our state so I'm going to go ahead and pass it back to Crystal. Who will take it from there.

Chairman Mike Peck:

Thank you very much Director I appreciate it. I also appreciate your support Representative Kifowit. Next we have the veterans home report, Gwen, are you available?

Gwen Diehl:

Good Morning Mr. Chairman and Good Morning Committee. My report is included in your packets where you will be able to view the details we will go over:

IDVA has 21 Funded Capital Projects underway at the Veterans' Homes totaling \$ 340,114,187. (Including IVH- Quincy)

Illinois Veterans' Home at Anna (One Projects)

- **General Building Repairs and Improvements**
 - 53% design
 - Anticipated construction completion 1-15-2025 \$ 2,666,700

Illinois Veterans' Home at LaSalle (Three Projects)

- **Replace Resident Room Doors** (27 each) in NW Isolation Wing
 - Designed and Bid.
 - 12% Construction with some Supply Chain Delays.
 - Anticipated Final Completion 6/01/2023 \$ 300,000
 - **Renovate Veterans Home**
 - Project design continues (29%). May be some Supply Chain impact)
 - Anticipated Final Completion 12/3/2025 \$ 5,194,400
 - **Replace Roofing System**
 - Project announced for Architect/Engineer Submittals
 - A/E Selection will be presented to CDB Board 3/14/2023 \$ 2,445,100
- \$ 7,939,500**

Illinois Veterans' Home at Manteno (Eleven Projects)

- **EMERGENCY Automatic Flush Valves, Mixing Valves & Water Filtration**
Construction is 97% complete
 - Pending operating permits from IL EPA for the Filtration Plant constructed in the south wing of Prince Building \$ 9,934,118
- **Replace Air Handling Units in residential buildings** (R3 & R4)
 - Still 40% project design completed
 - Anticipated Substantial Completion 7/29/2025 (no change) \$ 5,669,100
- **Replace Water Mains on campus** (Separating Domestic Water and Fire Mains)
 - Project design 29% completed (due to increased scope)
 - Anticipated Substantial Completion 9/09/2024 \$ 4,314,000
- **Central Kitchen Renovation** Project will renovate the Kitchen floor and Dish Machine Room)
 - Still at 18% design
 - Anticipated Completion 9/01/2023 unlikely and will have to be extended – (A/E in mediation with CDB regarding project scope and compensation.) \$ 950,700
- **Renovate Restrooms**
(Still in design and cost estimating. Project will renovate and update 120 Resident Restrooms plus Nurse Station and public rest rooms. Undergoing Code Analysis and design development.)

Due to ADA requirements, additional architectural changes may be needed, requiring additional funding.)

- Still in design – now at 12% due to the scope change
 - Anticipated Construction Completion 7/31/2025 \$ 5,300,000
 - **Replace Shingle Roofing Systems**
Project has been designed and bid
 - Contractor completing paperwork and obtaining materials
 - Work began September 2022 and is 25%
 - Anticipated Completion 2/07/2024 \$ 3,651,200
 - **Upgrade HVAC/Replace Air Handling Units (R1 R2 S1 S2)**
(Project is to provide additional ventilation R3 R4 S1 S2)
 - Still in design – 44 % (no change)
 - Anticipated Completion 2/28/2024 \$ 5,215,000
 - **(Additional) Renovation for Isolation Rooms**
(Project is to make final adjustments to the ventilation systems for isolation rooms in R1 & R2)
 - Punchlist items being completed \$ 557,038
 - **Upgrade HVAC/Replace Air Handling Units (Interconnects, A1 A2)**
(Project is to provide additional ventilation)
 - Still in design – 44 %
 - Anticipated Completion 2/28/2024 \$ 4,313,900
 - **EMERGENCY Assessment & Stabilization of Building**
(Vehicle crashed into at the center corridor of interconnect at R3/R4 intersection on September 20. Emergency Project was requested)
 - Repairs nearing completion \$ 200,000
- \$ 39,250,056

Illinois Veterans' Home at Quincy – (Eight projects)

- **Construct Domestic Water Loop**
(Overall project design is at 52% with design of the Water Loop nearing completion. Design for demolition of Water Tower is complete-went out for bid. Recommended accepting the single bid.)
 - Anticipate substantial completion of the whole project 12/01/2024 \$ 14,561,110
- **Construct New Nursing Home and Domiciliary**
 - Demolition is complete!
 - Construction is 38% complete
 - Anticipate substantial completion of the whole project 7/08/2026 \$ 270,835,506
- **Project to Expand Sunset Cemetery w/NCA Grant**
 - Committal Shelter and Columbarium are complete.
 - Landscaping and Punchlist underway.
 - Anticipate completion of the whole project 8/20/2023 \$ 1,386,025
- **Emergency Repairs to Storm Sewer Line (under Railroad bed)**
(Project still under design in coordination with BNSF Engineers, IL EPA and IL DNR.) \$ 988,000
- **Upgrade Electrical at HQs Bldg & Generator at Water Treatment Facility**
 - Architect/Engineer Firm selection Approved
 - Design development underway
 - Estimated completion 10/25/2025 \$ 980,800
- **Install Fire Suppression System**

- Architect/Engineer Firm selection Approved
 - Complete installation of fire sprinklers in IT Room in the old Stone Building, Smith Hall and Reig Admin Building
 - Estimated completion 12/25/2025 \$ 1,156,500
 - **Improve Ventilation in Kitchen at Hammond Hall**
 - Temporary Chiller installed
 - Design is complete and contractor on board
 - Possible Supply Chain Issues
 - Estimated completion 04/30/2023 \$ 350,000
- \$ 290,257,931**

21 Capital Projects underway at the Illinois Veterans' Homes

Anna (1)	2,666,700
Chicago (0)	0
LaSalle (3)	7,939,500
Manteno (10)	39,250,056
Quincy (7)	<u>290,257,931</u>
	\$ 340,114,187

VETERANS' HOME WEEKLY STATUS SUMMARY

Date: December 1, 2022

Home	Skilled Census	Budgeted Skilled Census	Skilled Vacancies	Admits This Week	Admits Next Week	Dom Census	Dom Vacancies
Anna	33	49	11	1	1	8	0
Chicago	25	200	175	0	0		
La Salle	92	190	98	1	0		
Manteno	170	294	124	3	2		
Quincy	252	386	134	2	3	35	53
Prince	8	15	7	0	0	0	

Home	Short Waiting List (Waiting Time in Weeks)						Long Waiting List				
	Skilled	Wait Time	SNU	Wait Time	DOM	Wait Time	PTime	Skilled	SNU	PTime	DOM
Anna	2	0			7	0	8	21		8	12
Chicago	190 (126 wartime)	11 SNU	10	-			49	0	0	0	
La Salle	24	0	7	0			0	18	0	0	
Manteno	15	12 wks	1	4			81	7	2	0	
Quincy	8	0	2	0	8	0	22	0	0	0	0
Prince	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	

Chairman Mike Peck:

Gwen, what is the status of the Chicago home?

Gwen Diehl:

I have to defer to the assistant director.

Steve Fixler:

I do have a question, how many veterans are at the Chicago home right now?

Gwen Diehl:

Yes sir, that is correct. We are still pending approval for per diem by USDVA. We are unable to fill the beds until they have approved us.

Steve Fixler:

Thank you.

Anthony Vaughn:

We currently have 25 residents at the Chicago home. As Gwen said, we have to hold at 25 pending our USDVA certification.

Director Prince:

Thank you for that. We're working towards VA certification and we're excited about that and we sometimes have to deal with scheduling. We can talk more offline on that if necessary. One of the things I want to say before we let her go, is this week is Gwen's last meeting with this organization. She is retiring, believe it or not the counter outside of her door says 00 on it "days to retirement." For those of, you don't know, she announced 300 Million dollars, but I think you're safe to say that Gwen has probably secured well over a billion dollars worth of construction money for this organization. 1 Billion dollars! So Gwen on behalf of all of us certainly speaking from IDVA's perspective that your departure is a bitter sweet moment. We know that we're not only losing knowledge, we're losing someone who absolutely adores what she does. United States Army Veteran, Bronze Star recipient, just a rock star. And so thank you for your service to this state, and congratulations on your recent nuptials and we look forward to you enjoying along and prosperous retirement. Thank you.

Gwen Diehl:

Thank you, sir. I'd also like to thank Roy Dolgos. He's the one that created this committee, and he's allowed me to serve on this committee since the very beginning. Thank you all.

Chairman Peck:

Thank you. Moving on to Public Information.

Maureen Hartigan:

Thank you for the opportunity to talk about what we're doing across the communications end. We continue to push out content to veterans to educate, inform, and connect with them across many different platforms. We are pushing out our veterans connections, monthly newsletter and it goes out to about 18,000 veterans via email with a 51% open rate, which in the open rate world that is pretty good. We also pushed it out over social media and send it out to our IDVA employees and veteran service organization partners. Social media, we amplify days of remembrance campaigns. Our operation Rising Spirit has been really successful. We've been getting a lot of coverage on that program, resulting in letters just pouring in. Our lottery the winter winnings, that was a campaign that we did over the fall. We promote our events and also ads for employment opportunities within IDVA. We have 11,000 followers, which I felt was a little low, but I did a little comparative shopping, and we are excelling way above some of the other departments of our size. So we're doing okay there. Our annual report is scheduled to be delivered on time by January 7th. That will be a comprehensive overview of 2022. We utilize media relations in terms of promoting our events, announcements, veterans grants awards. We've been utilizing PSA's which have been really successful across the state. In terms of job fairs and Operation Rising Spirit and some other programs. Our website we keep updated monthly. We have 16,000 to 20,000 visitors per month. The top 3 visits are to our benefits guide, field offices, and communications. We've all updated all of our collateral and existing material. We're looking for a rebrand in 2023

that will include a new logo and redesigning of our collateral and other things. That is my report pending any questions.

Chairman Peck:

Any questions for Maureen?

Director Prince:

Maureen, what was the number of people getting the newsletter?

Maureen Hartigan:

So it's 18,000 via email. That's 18,001.

Chairman Peck:

Next we have the veteran's cash lottery report, Connie Watson.

Connie Watson:

Veterans Scratch Off Lottery Ticket Program

IVAC Report Summary – December 14, 2022

1. Vets Cash Committee Review – FY23 Q1

The FY23 First Quarter Meeting was held on November 30, 2022, the Veterans Cash Grant Authorization Committee (GAC) reviewed 9 applications that were received from July through September 2022. The following is a detailed summary of what the GAC decided about each grant with a recommendation for 6 applicants to award, 1 applicant to deny, and 1 applicant held. All applicant votes described below were unanimous

Grant #	Rank/Score	Applicant Name	Requested	Denied	Awarded	Held
1. 739	(6/186)	Allenforce	\$71,872.35	_____	__X__	_____
2. 740	(9/119)	America Cares Too	\$100,000.00	__X__	_____	_____
3. 743	(1/227)	Featherfist	\$100,000.00	_____	__X__	_____
4. 744	(3/217)	Veterans Path To Hope	\$86,140.48	_____	__X__	_____
5. 745	(5/208)	Fishing For Freedom	\$25,000.00	_____	__X__	_____
6. 746	(7/157)	Revelation Golf, Inc.	\$27,293.65	_____	__X__	_____
7. 747	(2/223)	REBOOT Recovery, Inc.	\$36,867.00	_____	__X__	_____
8. 748	(8/151)	Merging Vets & Players	\$64,504.00	__X__	_____	_____
9. 744	(4/212)	Erase PTSD Now	\$99,382.00	_____	_____	__X__

- Funds Available: \$350,000.00
- **Grant Funds Awarded: \$347,173.48**
- Balance Remaining: \$2,826.52

2. Vets Cash Balance

Vets Cash Fund Balance (236 Revenues vs. Expenditures): \$1,769,908.84
(as of August 24, 2022)

Grants Currently Processing: \$127,684.26

Grant Awarded this Quarter	\$347,173.48
Reserved to Award in FY23 Q2:	\$300,000.00
Remaining Balance:	\$995,051.10

Next Committee Review Date:

February 15, 2023

Chairman Mike Peck:

Any questions for Connie?

Next we have the legislative report, Sara?

Sara Augustinas:

Hello everyone, my update today will be just a bit shorter since we have already had a pretty robust discussion, but I was recently in Springfield for the fall veto session. That was the week before and after Thanksgiving. It was a productive fall veto session for the members on this call and members of the general assembly, in terms of veterans legislation. It really was just the IJF bill that Representative Kifowit mentioned that moved during that time, more to follow in the winter lame duck session.

The schedules for the winter lame duck session, and the 103rd general assembly are live on ILGA.GOV. It's worth noting that the winter lame duck session takes place from January 4 through 8 comes back for the 10th. The inauguration of new members is on the 11th. The 103rd general assembly is set to end a little bit earlier than normal on May 19, 2023. The members on this call and of the general assembly know that sometimes they go over, sometimes they don't. So a slightly earlier end date there. In terms of Veterans Affairs, I think it's very likely and I would defer to that House members on the call, that we will continue to have House Committee on Veterans Affairs. In the Senate, it's less clear if we'll continue to have a committee for veterans affairs, and it wouldn't be uncommon or surprising if a lot of the Veterans Affairs bills ended up in their specific areas, like higher education. It seems more likely that they will end up in state government committee. So I will be waiting for news on that. It's very common for newer members of the general assembly and newer staffers to work on Veterans Affairs issues. So, I have some new staffers that I'm working for with all 4 caucuses on Veterans Affairs. So I've been meeting with them and connecting so that they're familiar with our items in our budget and some of our agency initiatives and things like that.

A big focus for the 103rd general assembly for the agency will be the introduction of our FY24 budget. We've always gone to the Health and Human Services budget committee in the house. Again, the Senate used to have a Veterans Affairs appropriations subcommittee under appropriations. We'll see if we end up in the Health and Human Services hearing again or if they continue to look at DVA specifically and just our veterans budget. So more to follow on that.

A big, thank you to the legislators who have shared information on Operation Rising Spirit. I've had a couple of different emails where that's been shared on individual

websites and caucus websites. So I know we'll be receiving a lot of notes and cards there.

My last update is just that I have been with IDVA for roughly 10 and a half, almost 11 months. And we've had quite a few constituent cases that. I think we're at 165 or 170 for the year so far. For the most part, those get filtered out to veterans service officers to address claims and benefits questions. Sometimes I send them off to Kourtney or others in terms of connecting to direct service providers. We've sent some cases to IJF and then in the instances where they involve applicants or potential applicants to the homes, they go to the adjutants at each of our five homes. If you do have constituents or veterans in the community who are not quite sure where their case needs to go, please feel free to send them my way.

That is my update pending any questions.

Chairman Peck:

Sara on the IJF bill, what's the major difference on the bill that's being introduced?

Sara Augustinas:

So I will turn it over to Representative Kifowit after this, but the IJF bill initially was filed in spring of 2021 on a different bill. It was 2639 or 93 and the housebill 5542, which is the current number, is the bill that was negotiated last veto session prior to my working for the agency with the previous liaison, Rep. Kifowit and the Senate GOP. That bills language allows for DMA and DVA to provide support and administrative support to IJF. It does not have language on legal support and that's kind of where the holdup was last time.

Representative Kifowit:

Just overall, Illinois Joining Forces is a public private partnership between the state of Illinois, and the nonprofit foundation, Illinois Joining Forces to help provide pretty much a resource for struggling veterans or veterans that need to be connected to services. This bill, I've been introducing an IJF bill for now 3 or 4 years. Our final version is now on 3rd reading and what it does is it's mostly cleanup language with regards to, it had minutiae in the law, like working groups and some of that that are no longer viable, because the structure changed, and it also had a mechanism to expand the board. What we were finding is that the board was very limited in scope, and they wanted to get more experts and more involved individuals on the board. It was very limited, so we put in their mechanism of a 1 to 1, because it's a public private partnership, a 1 to 1 appointing authority that the board can appoint somebody and that the director of military affairs, or the director Veterans Affairs can appoint somebody so that the board stays in equal public private partnership. Right now some of the issue is that they have to wait for the governor's office to approve appointments, it's been slow. We still have some board members that haven't gotten the green light yet. And so what we're doing is we just changed the structure to make it more efficient and more beneficial.

As for the IJF status, the audit is getting cleaner every year. They just received a 400,000 dollar Staff Sergeant Fox grant. They received 20,000 dollars from the as well. So the new executive director, Brenda Ousch is on top of things, and getting things going in the right direction so it's an organization. In the past people were really

concerned about, but now going forward we can be proud that they're doing the job that they're set out to be done. So, mostly that Bill that's on 3rd is technical changes for the most part. The biggest change was the structure of the board structure that increase the board and allows for that now a 50/50 split. 50% appointees and 50% board members.

Chairman Peck:

Thank you.

While we are still under legislation, Senator Wilcox do you have any additional comments?

Senator Wilcox:

At this point I think we've probably covered everything that I'm aware of that'll be coming in a timely manner. So I don't think anything additional. Thank you.

Chairman Peck:

Representative Yednock?

Representative Yednock:

Yes, sir. I don't have anything to add. Thank you.

Chairman Peck:

Thank you very much.

Representative Swanson?

Representative Swanson:

I have nothing to add Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman Peck:

The Attorney General's office comments, Shannon Yount?

Shannon Yount:

Good morning everyone. Since the September meeting the office has been busy, so I will just highlight a few things. I said earlier the Attorney General's office has been working with Senator Wilcox and Representative Kifowit. If anyone has any questions or needing information to anyone to file a complaint with our office, which they can reach out to me, or they can send out an email. I can provide the information in the chat box. If they need information if a person that calls them is a nonprofit, we have a search tool. I can post my email address in the chat box if anybody has any questions. Chairman has been providing me some great information, and we've utilized it to provide information to veterans. In November, we put the Attorney General released a press release with the links to information pertaining to claims. If you have any questions about claims scams, specifically consumer scams they can reach out to us. I know that other veteran service organization representatives reach out to us and it's been very helpful, providing the information to the veterans community on a monthly basis. I read the IDVA newsletter to get some tips and find out what the trends are and I follow them on social media. So I get my information from them and we kind of switch

out information. On a monthly basis I speak to Maureen. Right now what I'm preparing for 2023, I'm going to be updating my distribution list, so please feel free to connect with me to make sure that I have your most up to date information. I know some of the veteran service organizations are switching out their representatives. So, please reach out to me so that I can make sure when I send out information that it gets to your veteran service organizations, and that we can continue to share all of the great information that we have, and just to prepare and the veterans and spouses, independents in the veteran community. I think that's everything I'm looking forward to the upcoming year and continuing all these relationships that we've built over the past year. Does anybody have any questions for me?

Chairman Peck:

First of all my thanks to the Attorney General's office for the information on Camp Lejune. I had grave concerns with some of the advertisements and I think the Attorney General's warning was very prudent. So thank you for that. Any questions for Shannon?

Thank you, Shannon.

Eric, do you have anything from IDES?

We had 1 item old business and that was the university tuition scholarship program. Does anybody have an update on the scholarship program or questions on it? This is where the veteran scholarship university scholarship program that's awarded by the state.

Representative Swanson:

Under the Old Business at the last meeting, I addressed a concern with information being entered on death certificates by coroners. This past November I was at VSO office and as I was sitting there, he had a widow who's husband died in August. On the death certificate it had listed that this veteran died from a heart attack when in fact he had leukemia brought on by Agent Orange. This was most like a contributing factor to his death. Now this widow was having to go back to the doctor who signed that death certificate and to try and convince this doctor to make a change to a death certificate to identify that there was a contributing factor. I think this more than just a coroner issue. It needs to be addressed to maybe the Illinois State Med Society or through some PSA's or any other way to get this information out. It's disgusting and hard on that widow to have to go back to a doctor and say you didn't do your homework, my husband has contributing factors to his death and can you make a change because it means the world to me and my financial world and also my veterans world. Thank you.

Chairman Peck:

I appreciate that when I was superintendent, I had to make some changes on death certificates and believe me going through the Department of Public Health and get it done.

John Murray are you on?

John can you answer any questions on that? I know you come across that problem.

John Murray:

Yeah, what we do is that we try to educate the veteran population. If there's a death or anything, we work with the funeral homes so that they reach out to us. If there's anything pending, we try to head that off to make sure the death certificate has whatever the coroner puts on there, the medical examiner and then on the secondary column, the secondary box, you know, we try to put whatever service related medical conditions are in there. If that doesn't work out, we have to do the same thing. We have to go to the coroner, we have to go to the medical examiner, we have to go to the doctor, and we have to delay this whole thing to try to get the death certificate updated. It's challenging. It's frustrating. It's frustrating for the widow. It's frustrating for the family, and it's frustrating for the advocates that are working with them, but it needs to be done. Once you hear about that to try to resolve that to get those benefits initiated.

Chairman Peck:

Thank you John.

Any other questions on the on the coroners death certificate.

Unknown Speaker:

I know individuals from the Department of Veterans Affairs and Jesse Brown is currently in discussions with the Cook County Medical Assessors for better reporting of veteran's suicide. I don't know if those discussions could kind of, like, lead into what we're currently talking about right now. Maybe have them like do like a handoff from the VA to the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs? Does that make sense?

Director Prince:

I will address this offline

Chairman Peck:

Bill Wolff, I think we're down to you, Bill are are you ready for your report on the nominating committee?

Bill Wolff:

Mr. Chairman, I sent out a letter to find out how many candidates would be interested in running for the Chair and Vice Chair positions. We received 2 letters. So I think at this point we open nominations up to see if there are any additional members to add.

Chairman Peck:

I appreciate all your all your efforts. At this time I'll ask are there any nominations for Chair for the IVAC?

Motion to nominate Keith Wetherell as Chairman of IVAC made by Bob Tyler and 2nd by Bill Wolff.

No other nominations were received.

Motion to close the nomination for Chairman of IVAC made by Bill Wolff and 2nd by Joe Schaler

We have a motion made and 2nd to close the nominations. All in favor Signify by saying "I".

Motion carried.

Are there any nominations for Vice-Chair?

Nomination for Bob Tyler as the Vice Chair made by Joe Schaler, 2nd by Keith Wetherell.

Any other nominations for Vice Chair? Hearing none.

Joe Schaler made a motion to close nominations, 2nd by Vince Long.

All in favor Signify by saying "I".

Motion Carried.

Congratulations to Col. Tyler and Keith Wetherell.

Keith, do you have any comments you would like to make before I close the meeting?

Chairman Wetherell:

I look forward to working with the Director Prince and the council. I will do everything I can to help veterans in the state of Illinois.

Past Chairman Peck:

I look forward to you and Bob doing a tremendous job and I would like to Thank Crystal Womack for all of her support, you'll find that Crystal is your right hand lady. You will have to appoint of Secretary, though, because she can't vote.

Our next meeting will be March 8, 2023.

Jerry Field:

I'd like the current chairman on great job that he is put into it and all the time that is put into work drive and thank him for his service.

Past Chairman Peck:

I appreciate that, it has been my honor to serve.

Again, I thank you all, Director Prince for his guidance, and again, Crystal, I thank you.

Well ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for your time. Is there a motion to adjourn?

Motion to adjourn made by Bill Wolff
2nd by Keith Wetherell

Next meeting date: Wednesday, March 8, 2023