

Illinois Veterans Advisory Council – Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, September 9, 2025– 10:00am

Illinois Department of Affairs

WebEx

Attendance:

NAME	APPOINTED BY	PRESENT
Bruce Blackmer	Marine Corps League	X
Al Reynolds	Disabled American Veterans	X
Senator Mike Porfirio	President of Senate	X
Senator Craig Wilcox	Minority Leader of Senate	
	Speaker of the House	
Rep. Dan Swanson	Minority Leader of the House	X
Robert Norman	IDVA Director	X
Frank Gutierrez	IDVA Director	X
Kevin Wathen	IDVA Director	X
Vince Long	IDVA Director	
Bill Wolff	IDVA Director	X
Larry Miller	IDVA Director	X
Elizabeth Roxworthy	Department of Military Affairs	X
Shannon Yount	Attorney General	X
Adam Broshous	IL Secretary of State	X
Jorge Bermudez	IL Department of Securities	X
Michael Peck	The American Legion	X
Joseph Bartley	AMVETS	
Peggy Arick	Blue Star Mothers of America	
Tim Kennedy	Catholic War Veterans	
Dr. Jerry Field	Jewish War Veterans	
	Military Order of the Purple Heart	
Lee Lopez	Military Order of the World Wars	
Ray Dieter	Reserve Officers' Association	
Christa Hammers	IACVAC	X
John "Dutch" DeGroot	Veterans of Foreign Wars	X
Roy Dolgos	Vietnam Veterans of America	
Bob Tyler	MOAA	X

New Members:

Alternates / Guests: Art Dutkovic, Hugh Shown, George Mulvaney, Greg Padovani, Dean Farr

Call to Order 10:00am

Roll Call

Pledge of Allegiance

Moment of Silence

Introductions:

IDVA Staff:

Terry Prince, Director

Anthony Vaughn – Assistant Director

Jassen Strokosch, Chief of Staff

Crystal Womack, Senior Programs Manager

Maureen Hartigan, Public Information Officer

Jenny Franklin – Director's Executive Assistant

Angie Simmons – Senior Homes Administrator

Kimberly Yantis – Central Region Field Supervisor

Asia Gentry – Deputy Chief of Staff

Renysa Brown – Director, Veterans Accountability Unit

Dylon Hopp – Legislative Aid

Stephanie Heckenkamp – Chief Fiscal Officer

Danielle Luevano – Operations & Programs Manager

Approval of June 10th, 2025, minutes

Motion to approve the Minutes by Bill Wolff

Al Reynolds seconded the motion

Motion passed to approve the June 10, 2025 minutes

Chairman Tyler:

Thank you very much. Let's kick right over to the reports. Dylon, what can you tell us on the legislative front?

Dylan Hopp:

Good morning, everybody. I'll start off by reintroducing myself. My name is Dylan Hopp and legislative liaison. Most of you may know what Sarah Augustinas, our legislative director departed for law school. So I've been just holding over to when we get our next ledge director along with Asia Gentry our Deputy Chief of Staff. I also highlight since our last meeting that we had a veterans home visit at Quincy, elected officials visited, so thank you for those that attended. I know that was a really great event. I know the veterans appreciated talking with our elected leaders as well. Also legislative affairs side, we had our budgeting for results meeting where our initiative to change our vets volunteer force requirement, which was an outdated requirement based on paper applications, predating cyber vet. That was approved. I know some DMA initiatives were as well. I know last we talked the website had been updated. It has since been updated to reflect our legislation, although it does not have if the governor signed it into law yet, nothing did go to veto session, so that will be updated to just reflect that shortly, but if

you go now you can still see the updated legislation from the recent session. We're focusing on our agency legislative proposals with the governor's office, and just, you know, a reminders we continue to head towards session, if there's any initiatives that elective officials just wanna, bring up with us we're happy to discuss and take those on. But also flagging that we do have our big audits and reports due in January as well as the influx of invites that we're getting related to Veterans Day, specifically elected officials wanting to visit us, but also for our director and assistant director and so on to visit their organizations so just a reminder that it can be very busy and the schedules can be tight with with the amount of events that we get. Pending any questions that concludes legislative affairs.

Chairman Tyler:

Thank you Dylon. Anthony, I believe you're on top to give the director's report this morning.

Anthony Vaughn:

Thank you chairman. I'd like to take time to welcome everybody to this quarterly meeting, the quarterly IVAC meeting. I don't have a lot to report. One of the big things that we're working on is a Quincy update, the moving into the new building. We are really excited about that. We have a planned the grand opening on October 20th. The Governor's scheduled to be there as we open our new building. It's really hard to say how excited we are about that. We will have some residents start moving in prior to that. I believe next week. In all we will initially move in 30 residents and with those 30 residents there will schedule to have the US Department VA come out and certify the billing. So we have to hold it to approximately 25 or 30 residents to begin with. And then once we get our certification, then we can move the rest of the residents in that we plan to move in.

Next thing I want to talk about is our agency from a hiring standpoint. Hiring is always an important thing within the agency and since our last meeting, we have hired a 125 new members to the agency. We're moving very aggressively to hire and to get up to our budgeted headcount of 1795. Right now we sit at about 1310 I believe. And that's always a big push.

Another thing I want to highlight, I don't think we really highlight enough is the benefits work that we're doing out in the field. Since our last meeting our veterans service officers have seen close to 11,000 clients and since our last meeting and then that time period we've completed approximately a 9,000 claims for those. Some of those clients maybe repeat but seeing close to 11,000 clients. We're out there really fighting hard for our veterans in making sure that they get the benefits that they have earned. Pending any questions? That's my report.

Chairman Tyler:

Super. Thanks for the hard work Anthony and getting out and seeing all those veterans and in hiring people trying to get back up to your authorized head count. Very good. Any other questions?

Greg Padovani:

Anthony, thank you for that report, in the Quincy home, can you tell me how many residents that facility will be able to handle?

Anthony Vaughn:

It is a 210 bed facility. All of the beds are single rooms. We are still determining how much space we will have left when the remaining residents are moved in. We have not determined at this time how many spaces we will have for new residents. The headcount changes daily.

Representative Swanson:

Thank you appreciate it. And having been one of the people on the tour of the new Quincy home, what a beautiful facility it is, so much thought went into how best to care for veterans and family when they visit, it's just a tremendous facility and I encourage everyone if they get a chance to come take a tour there. Or at least try to make the arrangements to attend the 20 October ribbon cutting. And Anthony I appreciate the report you gave highlighting those numbers of claims that have been processed by our VSO's. One of the things I talked to other members of the houses. When we have VSO's increasing claims for our veterans, the revenues that generates for the state of Illinois is extremely large. And when I talk, not in hundreds or thousands of dollars, but hundreds of thousands of dollars when we start talking a hundred percent veterans, those numbers are real and it helps us then when we budget or when we work on veterans legislation, when we can show those numbers, it means a lot. It means a great deal when we can show those numbers. So, I know it'd be hard to change those numbers into dollars, but if there's some way we could look at some of those percentage increases or put some real dollar values with that, I think it would be important for us to be able to share that on the floor and in the senate too. So I appreciate that report Anthony, if you could possibly send out at least what you have today in an email, I'd sure appreciate it.

Anthony Vaughn:

I will have to gather that information and I'm glad you brought that up. Approximately, 2.8 billion dollars comes into the state through compensation and pension efforts. I'm proud to say that out of that 2.8 billion approximately 20% is generated by IDVA VSO's. One of the things I've always said about our veteran service officer is, is exactly what you're saying. We generate money for this state that is spent in this state. And I think that's very important things to note that our VSO's are out there working every day very hard to help the veterans increase their service connection benefits and help the veterans get their initial claims through. And also working with them on appeals, some of these appeals take years and a lot of diligent effort in research to get through and our veterans are out there studying and searching and finding every little nook and cranny every way that we can help them get it.

Chairman Tyler:

Thank you Anthony. Thank you thank you Rep Swanson and Shannon you had a question.

Vice Chair Yount:

Not so much a question. It's more of a request, for the December meeting. Dylan, would you be able to provide like a brief summary on any of the legislations because I know Sarah had talked about there's four that was going in the General Assembly that touched on veterans home. If there are any that passed this year that pertain to eligibility and application process for potential residents so that we're familiar and if

anything's had changed. If nothing's changed, I think that a brief is not necessary, but if there is a change on eligibility, the application or anything, I think that would be helpful for the members of the council to be aware of and to share that information with our groups. Cause I know that Sarah had talked on that, but do you think that's possible?

Dylon Hopp:

Yes, that's possible. I'll put together a brief on that eligibility and application processes changes if there are any.

Asia Gentry:

I think also the hope is that we can talk about what we're going to be going forward in spring session also. I think that would be helpful for this group to, so that you can support our initiatives going into the spring session.

Vice Chair Yount:

Okay, and then, I'm asking from IDVA if a staff member can provide a two to three minute overview on the new features of the website, because I think with some of the features that I just became aware of would be very helpful for us, as members of the veteran community and as individuals in the veteran service organizations. They have some new features I think would be useful for us. One of them is locating a veteran service officer and the other one is trying to get someone to reach out to that veteran or that family member. And I think that would be helpful for us as individuals and just be aware of the website and where things are located, so such as IVAC, we have a page on there, it lists all of the members and it has past minutes and all that stuff. So that's just a brief overview of possible two to three minutes.

Chairman Tyler:

Moving right along then, reports from the members of the council. I'd like for us to have a chance for all of the members of the council to be able to give a short, you know, a minute or less of what they've done in the past quarter to help our veterans, what's important to them that they're interested in. That's, by my count about fifteen or sixteen folks, so please keep your remarks relatively, you know, constrained to that time frame, and I'll start with Senator Porfirio.

Senator Porfirio:

No major updates. You know, for the group, I think as we. I don't expect anything really. german to us to come up during veto. So a lot of it just prep for spring session, you know, whether that's a budget or legislative requests, so look forward to those conversations. Had a good discussion with some of the IDVA team last week. I know Chair Swanson and I are trying to look at possible legislations around VACs around the county to chart a better path forward with that relationship I mean, the fact that in some parts of states we have counties suing vacs. That is unacceptable and that money could be spent in a lot of other better ways to serves the states, so I know that's probably something we hope to address the next session.

Chairman Tyler:

Thank you sir. Representative Swanson, do you have anything for us sir?

Representative Swanson:

Thank you. Appreciate it. Couple of things been going on in the foxhole here in Western Illinois and across the state I guess too. I've been getting a lot of calls about the definition of a gold star family. It maybe something that we all have to come together on and it's going to require legislation. I'd sure like to work with IDVA to help develop that legislation. There's discussions of who is a gold star family, is a gold star family only those families who lost someone in combat or the gold Star family someone who lost a loved one at home on leave from combat or lost a loved one just while they were home on leave from their duty station? Lot of emotions in that question and discussion alone. Second thing is, kind of on the line of veterans that was announced a couple of weeks ago that we were losing or over a month ago now that we were losing the ROTC program at Western Illinois University. And we say, well how's that affect veterans? Well affects us a lot because when we see the growth of our army and ROTC at WIU's primarily in army or ROTC, we look at the growth of the army, the largest recruiting year for many years, and when we start cutting ROTC programs, there goes the leadership for our future army. Last Tuesday, I received word that we were able to save ROTC it's just gonna be a satellite of the ROTC at Illinois State University. And many national Guard and army reserve soldiers come out of the ROTC program at WIU. Yesterday I had a great meeting with the young man, Martin macnera, he is the new peer recovery support specialist focusing on veterans, mental health out of Bridgeway, and Bridgeways in Galesburg, but they serve, I believe over six counties here in Western Illinois. I introduced him and I've suggested he reach out to the vsos within his area of operation and also the superintendents of the vacs, just what happened this afternoon WIU is having their veterans resource annual event at the WIU campus to bring the veterans together to talk about resources at WIU. One of the things he did ask me is, and I don't know if we have access to that I know we've talked about it at this meeting several times, but the list of prior service members leaving active duty and moving into Western Illinois if we could get lists of those veterans coming here to Illinois, those are the ones he'd like to start reaching out to, to provide his contact information so he can start addressing any mental health issues or issues in general here in Western Illinois. I told him I would ask this council today if that's possible or available. So, that's all I have. Thank you for the opportunity.

Chairman Tyler:

Thank you Representative Swanson. Do we have anybody speaking for Kevin Little from the National Guard?

Elizabeth Roxworthy:

Hey, good morning, chairman. This is Beth Roxworthy. So Kevin resigned in June or July, so he hasn't been with DMA. I just recently moved into the chief of staff position, so I'm covering for both the chief of staff and the legislative liaison. No real updates from the Illinois National Guard, DMA. We're obviously pending a lot of craziness with potential federalization with the national guard, but I will tell everybody that we have not, it has not been requested at this time, the Illinois National Guard for anything in Chicago, and then we do have a couple of legislative proposals. I won't brief them here today just because they have not been approved by the governor's office, but they would impact veterans. And service members in the Illinois National Guard do go through. Other than that, I have no other update.

Chairman Tyler:

Thank you Beth. Shannon?

Vice Chair Yount:

I'm just gonna be really brief. We finished up wrapping up our webinars, which are the the lengthy presentations not really lengthy, but more than thirty minutes, sometimes they go up to an hour and a half on areas of law that is practiced in the military and veteran rights bureau. And so since we wrap those up, we are, we just kicked off our hip pocket classes or presentations, if you guys are in the military, some of you called them hip pocket where it's just a marine thing. And so those are gonna be very short and concise to a topic, and we just kicked off the first one for mba. And we're looking to do it for Isera on the changes that have been passed on the very few things that changed in Isera and continue on with MBA and vet consumer. We are wrapping up on updating some of our material, so look for that in the future and we'll try and put out some information I'll send out an email. I think that's it for right now. If you want to be on the distro list for the webinars or the hip pocket classes, send me an email, or just reach out to me however way you want and I'll make sure you get on the email list.

Chairman Tyler:

Thank you. And from the Secretary of State Adam.

Adam Brochus:

Good morning. Nothing necessarily new to report. I just want to take a second to highlight a couple of the services that are offered through the Secretary of State's office. So reminder, there's thirty seven different license plates that are issued through the Secretary States office for veterans. The veterans designation and the driver's license, if you haven't done it's a pretty painless process to do in your DD214 when you're doing it. In fact I did mine with the real idea at the same time and it was pretty painless as far as the DMV can go. Registration renewal waiver, if you've got veteran that is on Active duty orders or just coming back from orders, they can have the registration fees waived for that first cycle upon return with the company of the orders that are coming back. Free duplicate driver's license and ID cards for the veteran if needed while on orders and that is actually extended to the spouse and children that are living within the family while that member is on active duty. Military license plates, the spouses of the the veteran are eligible to have those license plates transferred into their name upon the death of the veteran as long as they do it with a hundred and eighty days of the veterans death. Military license plates, if you don't have them, the transfer fee can be waived from regular passenger plates to a veteran plate. It's a one time thing. Same for a disabled veteran license plates. If upon getting those the new application fee for those is waived for the initial application time. And then finally, the Illinois Veterans History Project is available through the Department of Archives, important to get the history of our vegetans archived so the future generations can see what we've all done.

Chairman Tyler:

Thank you. Any questions? Ok, Eric or Rich from the Illinois Department of Security's.

Eric Bermudez:

Currently have a new JBSG jobs for veterans state grant manager. His name is Jonathan Horsley, so he'll be taking over control of the program for us. JBSG, that is the program where we assist veterans gain employment who may have barriers to employment and we also work with the employers to see if we could gain employment for all veterans who come into our ajcs, our American job centers. That's all I have sir.

Chairman Tyler:

Thank you sir. American Legion?

Greg Padovani:

The American Legion is gonna continue with focus on the veterans assistance commission in all the counties. Currently we have fifty two vacs. We'll also be educating delegates on the freedom of information act and the open Meetings Act. To give you an example of the challenge of that. The VAC's of Cook County we have over almost a hundred delegates. We are adding to the head count and even communication outreach to veterans.

Chairman Tyler:

Appreciate it. Mike Peck? Military Order of the World Wars

Mike Peck:

Yes, our focus right now is on the Illinois definition for veterans used by the secretary state's office to put the V on the driver's license. We like to encourage legislation so that the vacs can use that same definition for veterans emergency assistance. I found four different definitions for veteran in the Illinois statutes. But I'm very concerned about this one because of the use of the Guard & Reserve and I think it's veterans emergency assistance should apply to them throughout the states since they are Illinois residents.

Chairman Tyler:

Thank you sir. For ROA

Hugh Shown:

This is Hugh and I can just, say, thank you for the opportunity at the State Fairs in Springfield and also in DuQuoin. I think that was just super both places very, very good. And I will also just repeat again and we talked about Western Illinois and the loss of the ROTC program there and it being a satellite now, which is fine. But just to mention that there are lots of scholarships available and the one I'm going to mention is the Minute Man scholarship through the Reserve organization, not necessarily not ROA, but through the reserves in Washington D C, and there's representatives for that. Scholarships are certainly available and many of them, so we wanna emphasize that. And the other thing just to mention is the honor flights, and there is one going on today. Those individuals have left Springfield and are in Washington DC now and we wanna honor those veterans and their guardians that are with them and hope that trip goes well and I think there's one more on our flight letter this year that would be available.

Chairman Tyler:

Thank you sir.

While not technically a member because they're not federally chartered, Krista Hammers, anything from the Illinois Council of VAC's?

Christa Hammers:

We have our state training coming up next week. We learn all about the new legislation, everything else that all the other counties are doing. We do have fifty two vacs throughout the state. I am the superintendent of LaSalle County, so the biggest by land mass but not by veteran population, but numbers wise. So far this year we have brought in over seven million new dollars in benefits for our veterans, and that's new so even the ones that have been previously service connected, we don't count that previous service connection amount at all it's a new benefits. We have some of our vsos going to IDVA training coming up in the next month or so. I can't remember the exact date of that. Sorry Anthony, but we do have a couple of our vsos, from the counties training the IDVA Officials. It's great that we can work together as a team and do better for our veterans. Lasalle County has multiple outreach locations and we bring in entities from Heinz to come to our remote location to have them available for our veterans when our veterans may not be able to go all the way up to Heinz for those services as well. So we are doing much needed work in our remote area and we appreciate the opportunity that Heinz and IDVA has to work with us.

Chairman Tyler:

Thanks Christa. Dutch DeGroot, what do you have for us sir?

Dutch DeGroot:

Thank you Chairman. Alright, we are concentrating on Cook County especially with their budget coming up, also I'm glad to see that we have both the house and senate chairs here and we are I'm always interested in any legislation that they're going to introduce personally even though I'm not the chair to the VFW legislation anymore. But naturally the VFW is interested in all legislation that's beneficial veterans. Thank you.

Chairman Tyler:

Thank you so much, appreciate it. Roy Dolgos from the Vietnam Veterans of America, please. He's not there? Well, thank you all. I think that was very informative and good to hear of all the things going on. I appreciate all the inputs from each of your organizations and agencies and it's good to share that information. Any other questions or other comments at this time before we move on to two other reports? Shannon, you want to tell us how we're doing on the bylaw committee update?

Vice Chair Yount:

We're moving. That's how I can report it. So we are moving and we are making some positive changes. Just cleaning out I think there's a lot of housekeeping, a lot of, like, clarifying on definitions. Going back to where we are in the statute, and I think we can have something presented and sent out an email for you guys to review, before the December meeting.

Chairman Tyler:

Thank you. And thanks for all the hard work from your working group that's looking at that. We really appreciate it. Any questions for Shannon or the members of that working group at this time?

I think you all saw the email that we sent out that has copies of the current bylaws with the comments on attendance and the importance of that so please take note, and if you see something in the bylaws that really needs attention make sure you pass on to Shannon. We'd appreciate that. Questions for Shannon at this time? Okay, Hearing none.

The transition working group, I sent a request out to several folks that I thought would have some interest in that and have gotten no response back. But at the same time, I spent some time at the Chez Center over at the U of I and met with and talked to Lauren Easter who's at UIS about the program they have for helping veterans transition to veterans that are students at those universities. And the thing that struck me and I had a short conversation with Representative Swanson when we were at the state fair on this, and I've talked at length with the director of the IDVA at the same time, but the thing that struck me at these colleges is the focus on helping people in the transitioning from military service where they have such a structured environment to the less structured environment of the civilian world. And, Andy over at the Chez Center at the U of I commented and he said, you know, when you're on active duty, somebody tells you what time to get up in the morning, where are you gonna have breakfast, what you're gonna do all day. You've got a network just built for you right there, and that goes away as soon as, you know, you get out of active duty and we don't do a whole lot for them. And the thing that the Director and I noticed when we were down, particularly at the DuQuoin state Fair, was the plethora of agencies. We've got over two thousand in this state and forty six thousand nationwide. Agencies or organizations designed to help veterans. But they're putting band aids on after they have the problem not solving something first, you know, before they get there. So I was pleased that with the discussion when Representative Swanson mentioned the gent out west who's helping people make that happen. You know they want to contact them before they have trouble, before, you know, just check on mental health before they get to that problem. Those kinds of things and certainly a college has an opportunity to do things a little different than we do, but they, the opportunity to get information from the registrar to the veterans center so they can contact the veterans is a good thing. We've talked in the past about is there a way when somebody asks for a veteran identification on their driver's license, that'd be passed on to the IDVA for follow up with some way to contact them. The Chez Center goes out and reaches out periodically like the midterm grades comes out and grades to check in with the veterans to see how they're doing. And so if our organizations had a way to get the access to those people that we could do buddy checks with them, we might be able to help people get jobs and whatever. My short conversation with the representative Swanson at the fair, you know, convinced me and he was rightfully so in pointing this out that it's really a pretty big elephant, and I don't think there's any one agency that can handle, you know, the transition process. But each of us, and that's one of the reasons why I like these reports today, but each of us in our organizations reaching out to the 90% or so of the veterans that went into service and came out that are looking just to restart their life in the normal way and can use that help not just those that have been injured or are having issues or whatever, but if we

can work on the majority of the veterans that that come into service and come back out as or whatever, we might be able to get there.

Anyway, my working group hasn't done a whole lot in that other than me going around and talking to a lot of folks and thinking about it, but I would encourage each of us to find ways and I'd like to include in this year's annual report, those things that we're doing to help veterans, you know, from each of our agencies, we'll report from each of the agencies on what they're doing to assist in that transition of Illinois veterans when they come into the state to identify them, provide them the services that they need or access to those needs. So if I can ask all of you to think about that, in the future for our future reports I'd appreciate it. That's all I've got.

Bruce, did I skip you from the Marine Corps League?

Bruce Blackmer:

The Marine Corps League has a big year this year. It's our two hundred and fiftieth, or shall I say the Marine Corps has a big year with it being our two hundred and fiftieth anniversary. Marine Corps league detachments across the state are seeking practclamations from mayors, from village presidents, the county and everything across the state. You know, for the, two hundred and fiftieth. The Marine Corps league itself, our detachments across the state, we have forty detachments across the state of Illinois. Those forty detachments are working for four veterans, pretty much every day, you know, we want to help veterans. Of course, we're focused on Marines, but we will help veterans period. We do plenty of memorial services for veterans who are not Marines, you know, we're we're doing what the VFW and the American Legion used to do so well, but we're doing it, we are doing it because a lot of those other organizations just can't get out a color guard. They can't get out of a big enough color guard. They can't get out, you know, it's a very hard to get a 7 man group but we are doing it. That's my report.

Chairman Tyler:

Thanks for thank you very much.

That completes our reports unless I forgot somebody else, I don't see a hand up so I think we're good there. Is there any old business. I know of none. Any new business for us to handle today.

Danielle Miller:

So I just wanted everyone to know that we actually IDVA does work directly with the secretary of State in receiving information from the veterans who are going to secretary State and getting their driver's license or applying for a military license plate. So we do get that information sent over, and we've worked diligently to send some introduction letters via constant contact, which would be email, text message. Now we've implemented sending text messages to veterans. If we don't have their email address, and then we'll also do snail mail as well if that works best for them. So we've sent over five thousand IDVA introductions/welcome home letters already this year. And the website is good too for them. The last thing that I wanted to address was just the list of the returning veterans and, as much as I would love to share what we have on file, it becomes a, a privacy issue of the veterans.

I would also encourage everyone in this room if you know a veteran who has not received one or you know of a veteran who has recently been discharged and is coming home and needs that information to just shoot their information over to myself and I'll be able to add them to our list. You can send it to me, you can send them to a veteran service officer to put them in the system, and we'll be able to get them that information. We also have it on our website, the package is on our website as well.

Adam Brochus

Okay, so just to piggyback on that in first step, I apologize for not getting back to you on the transition email he sent out too many irons in the fire at this time of year, but it was brought to my attention through a complaint that came in through Danielle to the secretary States office that something came glaringly clear to me in that was that this particular veteran was a mother of a veteran that was reaching out, looking to help get something renewed. But one of the things was that the phones always busy and I know within the Secretary of State I run into that with trying to reach other departments that seems to be a common place thing, so one of the things I've seen a flare up the chain is looking for trying to find someone that says designated liaison to vets such as we have for disabled persons. I think they haven't heard anything come back down the chain yet, but that was through that kind of helped identify that and it was one of the things I had intended on getting back to you on that. That was something that was identified that in the website does have a spot for veterans, but little less than adequate as far as I'm concerned.

Chairman Tyler:

Okay, super. Thanks Adam. And Frank, you have your hand up?

Frank Gutierrez:

I just had a quick question. Maybe a possible suggestion. I know the federal government Department of labor, they have the, I forgot the name of the badge, the recognition for employers when it comes to veteran hiring. I do know that the I guess the parameters for qualification are pretty high. Well you're hired a hundred and twenty five, hundred thirty veterans last year. We still don't qualify, and I'm wondering if the state of Illinois could possibly put together, I don't know, maybe it might be a good idea or something for the state of Illinois to have their own Veterans medalion type of program.

Chairman Tyler:

Frank I appreciate that as you mentioned that I was just down at Evansville, Indiana at a World War II museum that they had down there. They've talked really about Evansville at war if it will and the businesses down there based on how much either whatever they were manufacturing or how many people they hired or whatever, they had different levels of stars, you know, one star, two star up to five stars for the amount of support they had in the war effort. So a similar program as you're suggesting for hiring veterans. Could be an incentive for businesses to do that. That's an interesting thing to look into. I'm not sure, how one would start that, but if somebody's got an idea, that would be interesting. Thank you.

Larry Miller:

I know that the American Legion and I believe the VFW will recognized employers who employ veterans. They have programs for those. They can give them the honor them at their at their state conventions. National conventions as well.

Chairman Tyler:

So maybe individually our groups associated in those communities could reach out to them and provide that. Thank you Larry. Eric your hand is up.

Eric Bermudez:

Good morning still. To piggyback off of what Frank was talking about was the hiring our vets program, that was program instituted by president Trump. And so what has to happen with those employers is they actually pay to have their information reviewed by the government, by the Department of Labor, and they are awarded that way. For the second part of Frank's comment, we used to have the Illinois hiring our heroes consortium. It was a spearheaded both by IDES and the IDVA. And that program was under, I wanna say Director Borgren and Director Mayes from both those agencies respectfully. So that's been something that we had in the past, what happened with it was when the HBMP came around, they actually discontinued the IHHC. That's why we don't have one specifically for Illinois for our employers. They could be awarded by us here in the state.

Chairman Tyler:

Interesting, thanks for the event update on that. I saw some interesting facial expressions as you said that so that may be something somebody will take for action. Any other comments? For the good of the council?

Bill Wolff:

When they're talking about hiring veterans, they used to have a program that the unions mostly belong to and it was called Helmets to Hard Hats. Does anybody know what happened at that program?

Crystal Womack:

That program's actually still active Mr. Wolff in Southern Illinois down in Carbondale and down at Wren Lake. They were going to participate in the DuQuoin fair this year, but they ran short on manpower. They're supposed to be sending some information to update where they're at in their program now. So when I get that I can share.

Chairman Tyler:

Thank you Crystal.

Any other comments or public comments for the group?

Once again, I'd like to thank all of you for taking your time today. I'd like to especially thank you for your individual reports. They were most informative and, I see some good things going on and keep doing good things for our veterans. We appreciate it. With that, our next meeting is Tuesday December 9th at 10:00am, same place, same time, all that good stuff. Representative Swanson, did you raise your hand?

Representative Swanson:

With Danielle comments, I thought those were very interesting and just trying to think of how we could get that information so it can be made more available to those individuals who most closely work with our veterans on a day to day basis, whether it's a state VSO or a VAC. As I mentioned Mr. MacNamera, those who can best help serve those veterans when they do come home. We were seeing so much, so many difficulties when our veterans return, and like I said this afternoon I'm gonna be attending WIU's veterans resource and will introduce them and talk to them about some of the resources available throughout the state. So I think if there's a way if it would require legislation or whatever the case maybe, I think my colleagues and I we could get together and try and, make that more available if at all possible. Thank you.

Chairman Tyler:

Thank you sir.

Anything else that I missed? Save nickels?

Next meeting Tuesday December 9th at 10:00am, same time, same place, and I'll entertain a motion to adjourn. Larry Miller makes a motion, is there a second?

Motion to adjourn made by Larry Miller

2nd by Bill Wolff

Motion passed