

There were 70+ participants on the call.

**United Veterans Coalition
General Meeting by ZOOM
Tuesday, December 8, 2020
9:00am**

Call to Order- President Dennis Orr called the meeting to order at 9:05am.

Invocation – Dr. Diane Ricci, Chaplain, Jefferson Count VSO

Pledge of Allegiance – Dick Young, 1st Vice President

Guest Speaker – President Dennis Orr introduced Brigadier General Laura Clellan, the Executive Director of the Colorado Dept. of Military and Veterans Affairs, and the 44th Adjutant General of Colorado. She is the first woman to lead the Colorado National Guard. General Clellan gave brief remarks, and noted that there has been unprecedented need for the Guard this past year.

Besides “normal” deployments they have led the COVID-19 response for the state, dealt with the out-of-control wildfires, and the shortage of personal protective equipment for frontline workers.

Ray Hopkins is her deputy director now, but when he is deployed, Dave Callahan and Greg Dorman will fulfill the deputy role.

Brief discussion was held on women veterans; Deb Kinney mentioned research that she is doing on women and transitions. Of the 45,000 women veterans in Colorado, only 14,000 are involved with the VA in any way. Access to the VA needs improvement. Rocky Mountain Regional Medical Center Director Michael Kilmer reported that the women who are involved with the VA have a positive attitude about their care. Shelly Kalkowski mentioned that one of UVC’s legislative goals is to establish a woman veteran coordinator position at the state level.

1st-time Guests – Steve Estle, formerly with IBM, now a business consultant. He is interested in getting involved with UVC.

Roll Call – Dick Wilson There were nine primary organizations present; AGIF, TREA, VVA and Women’s Marine Association were absent.

Membership – Dick Wilson’s committee is still focusing on gathering the correct contact information for Associate and Affiliate members.

Rocky Mountain Regional Medical Center – Director Michael Kilmer reported that “we are ready” for another surge of COVID cases. They have been working with Wyoming and Montana, transferring some patients and shipping some equipment to them. He is meeting weekly with the VSO’s to give them a COVID update. They should have a supply of the new vaccine by the week of December 14. He described what they are doing internally to improve teamwork and effective communication. They are analyzing nurse contacts with patients, and experimenting with schedule changes to better serve patients. When questioned, he did affirm that they have a bioethicist on their staff; they will follow the national VA guidelines on prioritizing patient care.

State Legislative – Dan Jablan gave an update on the special session; 9 COVID-related bills were passed. Representative-Elect David Ortiz wants to work with UVC on legislation, specifically on a veterans preference bill and one on veterans’ treatment courts.

Veterans Experience Action Center – David Francavilla reported on their recent event, providing information about the VA, and local community resources.

Federal Legislation – Dennis Churgovich emailed a summary report, updated as of December 7, 2020.

Silent Auction – Karen Hone reported that not many people have bid yet; there still is confusion about how to do it. She encouraged everyone to keep trying.

Banquet – Currently scheduled for Sunday, April 25, 2021, but probably will be re-scheduled for a later date. This will increase the probability of hosting an in-person event.

Operation Clearinghouse – Dick Young and Dennis Orr described this effort: to create a web-based clearinghouse of all resources available to veterans, covering everything from employment, to healthcare to suicide prevention. This “one stop to find out everything” approach would mean a veteran could get numerous questions answered easily. More information will be coming on this as it progresses. The interactive map that Dick Young developed several years ago will be the starting point.

Regional Vice Presidents

Bob McLaughlin reported that they put on “Turkeys for Troops” and distributed 1500 turkeys and 500 meals. They see the most need in these areas: counseling, food giveaways and rental assistance. The VCLC working group is continuing to meet.

Pat Hammon said they have been interviewing for the academies, and the candidates are very impressive. She noted that the grant applications are available on the web, and they are due March 1, 2021. These are for the Veterans Trust Fund and Veterans Assistance grants.

Sen. Larry Crowder would like to see legislation that would allow recipients of the Purple Heart to get free admission to all national parks.

VSO’s, Associate and Affiliates – No report

Congressional Liaisons

Rep. Crow – Emily Amador noted that there will be a vote on the NDAA soon. Their staff is gathering Holiday Cards for Heroes in their Parker office; the USO will distribute.

Governors’ Office

Adam Zarrin gave an update on COVID. One out of forty-one Coloradans has the virus, but 41% of them are asymptomatic. He cautioned everyone to keep wearing masks, washing hands and be aware of social distancing. He summarized available openings on boards or commissions, and encouraged people to apply.

VCLC Administration – Rose Campbell thanked everyone for their support of veterans. The needs assessment is underway, and results will be presented in January 2021. Pat Hammon cautioned that the results need to incorporate the rural point of view. Rose Campbell gave a very brief COVID update.

Old Business – None

New Business - None

The meeting was adjourned at 10:56am.

Karen A. Hone
Secretary