

There were 90+ participants on the call.

**United Veterans Coalition of Colorado
General Meeting by ZOOM
Tuesday, January 12, 2021
9:00am**

MINUTES

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

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

Pledge of Allegiance – Dick Young 1st Vice President

1st Time Guests – Bob Brazell, John Evans and Ben Doon were introduced.

Roll Call – Dick Wilson These primary organizations did not have a representative present:
American GI Forum, Jewish War Veterans, PVA and TREA

Announcements – Lorie Trego announced an initial meeting of Partners in Veteran & Military Health. There will be a virtual exhibit hall, and she invited interested participants to contact her.

Steve Best introduced Chris Boyer, the new Executive Director of the Honorbell Foundation. Michelle Mallin has resigned to focus on her health & family. Steve noted that

Michelle has been a driving force from the time the Foundation was created, and he thanked her for all her hard work.

Rocky Mountain Regional Medical Center – Director Michael Kilmer reported on the status of the vaccination effort for COVID19. They are making good progress in vaccinating veterans over 75; there are over 11,000 veterans in their system who fall into this category. They are maintaining two testing clinics, and they are back doing elective surgeries. They have an audio care capability that allowed a major effort to poll veterans on whether or not they want the vaccine. 70% want the vaccine and 30% do not. They are planning to vaccinate 1000 people per day, once they get adequate supplies. When they get the Moderna vaccine, they will start a mobile unit that can focus on rural areas.

VARO – Chris Holly reported that they have been working on the backlog of claims and appeals, and have done a good job of shortening the wait on these issues. He said to let him know of any cases of delay and he would be happy to look into it. He can be reached at Christopher.holly@va.gov

Financial Report – Paul Gremse noted that the checking account balance at December 31 was \$42,562.

Presentation: Operation Equine – Michelle Kaye gave a brief presentation about Operation Equine, an equine-assisted program of psychotherapy for military veterans and their families. She encouraged people to consult their web page for more specific information, www.operationequine.org

Federal Legislative – Dennis Churgovich had emailed out a brief report. The NDAA was passed by a vote overturning President Trump’s veto. It increases the list of diseases associated with exposure to Agent Orange, good news for Vietnam veterans. He would like to see legislation in the new session to include:

- Sexual assault & harassment (I am Vanessa Guillen Act)
- Exposure to toxic chemicals in Iran & Afghanistan
- Achieving concurrent receipt of service earned retirement pay and VA disability pay

He encouraged the group to let him know if there are other bills they would like to see UVC monitor or support.

State Legislative – Dan Jablan January 13 is the first day of the new session, and they will be out by Friday. The next tentative date to re-convene is February 16. They already have sponsors for the veterans’ preference bill. Representative-Elect David Ortiz is being extremely helpful to UVC. The next meeting of this committee is January 26.

Silent Auction & UVC Banquet – Karen Hone reported that the auction produced \$2000 in sales, and when donations are added in the total was about \$3000. Banquet – an invitation has been extended to the new TAG, Brigadier General Clellan, to give the keynote speech. New date is Sunday, June 27, 2021. The hope is to offer an in-person event as well as a virtual component such as livestreaming the awards and keynote.

Suicide Prevention – Richard Nagley noted that their report is 98% finished. They are trying to get more information about the Governors’ Challenge so they aren’t duplicating issues. The final draft should be ready at the end of the week.

Regional Vice Presidents

Senator Larry Crowder reported that he met with staff at the National Conference of State Legislatures and asked if they have data on the initial causes of suicide, or if there is any common denominator that motivates someone to commit suicide. He will report back when he gets an answer.

Richard Nagley mentioned the forum they are holding next week.

Pat Hammon said they had an excellent suicide prevention class. Numbers are rising for DUI’s and domestic abuse which could be warning signs of potential suicide.

CDVA – no report.

CBVA – Pat Hammon reported that the Military Family Relief Fund, which is used often for the National Guard, will sunset. The Board is very concerned about this and is working to obtain further funding. They have great concern over evictions, a very complex issue. Transportation needs are down because of the growing use of telehealth.

VSO’s, Associates & Affiliates – No report

Governor & Congressional Staffers – Adam Zarrin of Governor Polis’ office said they are working on funding for evictions. COVID19 cases & hospitalizations are still high. The hope is that the vaccine will

begin to take effect and numbers will go down. He referred people to the website, <https://covid19.colorado.gov> for additional information.

Emily Amador of Congressman Crow's office said he was one of the sponsors for the impeachment resolution. Ralph Bozella made a motion (and Pat Hammon seconded it), to recognize Congressman Crow for his bravery and courage during the Capitol siege last week. There was discussion and then Steve Kjonaas then made a motion to table the motion on the floor until the next meeting. Motion passed. Emily Amador said their office would welcome knowing of any cases where they could be of help.

VCLC Commission – Robby Robinson reported that the needs assessment is being released today. Two key notes are that the data does not support the expansion of additional nursing homes, and that the existing ones are not located in areas of high density veteran populations.

VCLC Administration – Rose Campbell noted that the entire document is located on the VCLC main page. There will be further analysis and work to be done to implement recommendations.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 am.

Karen A. Hone
Secretary