

## **Ontario Town Hall Meeting Minutes**

Paul Evans opened the evening by providing an overview of the Governor's Task Force, its process and its objectives and timeline.

Noting that there is a need to help veterans with PTSD and TBI, a participant said that even the college professors are noting that their students are different than before they deployed. The Task Force agreed, and said it is important that everyone knows to direct these veterans to their CVSO so he can get them enrolled in VA health care and get them treatment.

The Task Force was asked how the nation is preparing to deal with the long-term effects of this war. Paul Evans delved into the long-term consequences (health care, mental health, benefits) and explained the key is finding the veterans as early as possible and getting them into the system. He used the Deschutes County example that there are 15,000 veterans in Deschutes County but only 4,800 are signed up for VA health care. He said we have to do a better job connecting veterans to their benefits.

One veteran said he had a hard time enrolling in VA health care. He was enrolled at Boise but then was in Miami for a period of time and had to do all sorts of paperwork there to re-enroll. Jack Heims said that should not have happened. The veteran said that Miami re-enrolled him after six hours and then when he returned to Ontario he had to re-enroll at Boise. The veteran said that he was told that each VAMC is an individual entity for which you have to enroll each time. Jack Heims said that with his universal access card (VAMC ID) he should have been seen without enrollment at each place.

Paul Evans responded to a question about how the VAMC is not enrolling veterans in Category 8 (income more than \$30,900 a year) by saying the opportunity may be right to suggest universal health care for veterans via the VA health care system.

A recent Iraq vet noted that his peers are still going through their "superman" phase and not admitting they have problems. He said that the out-processing health assessment does not work because soldiers just check the box saying their fine so they can go home. He said there needs to be more follow up. He suggests giving veterans 60-90 days to decompress and then hook them into family support. Jack Heims explained the process for the 90-120 day post deployment health reassessment.

A Vietnam vet said that for his generation of veterans health care is the main issue.

Director Willis updated the group on the progress of building a second Veterans' Home. A veteran noted that Idaho will not allow Oregon veterans to use its home in Boise and The Dalles is very far away. Director Willis said that Oregon has agreements with Washington and California to allow their veterans to use the Oregon home so he would look into doing the same with Idaho.

The meeting adjourned at 9 p.m.

