

Oregon Veterans' Services Task Force

Whole Group

Date: Thursday, April 10, 2008

Place: Room 360, State Capitol

Convened: 3:10 p.m.

Members not present (known): Erinn Kelley-Siel, Rep. Jeff Barker, Tino Ornelas, Peggy Boquist, Mic Alexander, Ann Malosh, Diane Gooding, Krissa Caldwell, Bill Taylor.

Chair, Paul Evans (Governor's Veterans' Policy Advisor) welcomes all and gives an overview of agenda. States there are a couple of announcements from some folks and then ODVA will make a quick presentation and provide some helpful information. Then all will break out to subcommittees. Special guests today – folks from Revenue to rotate to subcommittees to speak and answer questions.

Around the table introductions- (*bolded names are those individuals listed as task force members as of 4/10/08*)– **Amy Goodall**, Jack Heims for Jim Tuchs Schmidt, **Scott McCrae**, **Jerry Lorang**, Paula Brown, **Jim Willis**, Mac MacDonald, **Brig. Gen. Mike Caldwell**, **Mike Burton**, Brian Shuck, Paulina Miller, **Victor Merced**, **Jim Keller**, Alan Fleishman for Jeff Barker, **Debbie Koreski**, Sharon Hall for Karissa Caldwell, **Jim Booker**, Ed Hayes, **Bruce Goldberg**, **Dan Estes**, Dan Long, Paul Werner, Tom Mann, Sasha Pollack for Senator Peter Courtney, Val Conley, John Concepcion, John Phillips, Debra Buchanan, Chris Allanach, Robin Steckley, Max Brown, Mike Ahern, Mark Meidema and Keith Juran.

During introductions –

Jerry Lorang brought up that he has been appointed as a member of the ODVA Advisory Committee and as such he has been approached specifically about two items - the sustenance allowance for Chapter 31 veterans, and the current value of the Oregon real estate veteran tax exemption not being what it once was. Wanted to share for the benefit of the group.

Chair Evans continued – thanked everyone for being here, and for some making the effort despite short notice. Gave the schedule for meeting topics: Today (April 10) is *revenue*, **April 17-employment**, **April 24-health care**, **May 1-education**, **May 8-housing**, **May 15-federal issues**.

Chair Evans then refers to Tom Mann of ODVA to begin presentation.

Key points of presentation –

- Difficulties of identifying veterans, where and how to reach them.
- Low response to ODVA Welcome Home Packets sent in response to DD-214's.
- Variety of outreach is provided.

- Veterans' Service Officer (VSO) represents a veteran and files claims on their behalf.
- 34 counties have VSO's. (Polk and Marion are served by ODVA).
- All federal VA claims come through the ODVA claims office in Portland.
- ODVA works closely with all county VSO's.
- VSO's refer veterans to services and programs but often it is up to the veteran to follow-through.
- Difficult for these individuals to admit that they need help and then to take the action to seek assistance.

Questions/statements that followed -

Brian Shuck – There is a disconnect in getting the veteran to the services they need. This is a major problem. Possibly a directory that contains all services and programs should be distributed to those who assist veterans

Mike Burton – Concern was expressed about the reasons for low response to Welcome Home Packets? More discussion possible at a later time.

Chair Evans – resumes and dismisses members to their subcommittees – Post Separation to Rm. 243, Retirement/Seniors Rm. 160, and Reintegration to remain in Rm. 360.

Task Force reconvened at 5:04.

VA Handbooks are handed out for all task force members. Chair Evans calls on the chairs of the subcommittees to report briefly on their progress today.

Dan Estes – (Senior/Retirement) spent time on the claim and application process as well as the Oregon Veterans' Home and future Homes to meet the need.

Mike Burton – (Reintegration) discussed the amount of information and data coming in. There was great discussion on what services most important, when to contact and reach this group.

Paul Evans – (Post Separation) kept the Revenue folks in their meeting and asked lots of great questions of them. One of the items addressed is the concern for Oregon and particularly counties as a result of loss of timber revenues.

Chair Evans stated that there is a need to get a vet count of all veterans who are receiving public services and asks that the group spread the word. Announcement that a film of an Oregon Guard Unit will be showing at the Elsinore Theater in Salem on Sunday, the 13th @ 3 p.m. Also a book out there titled "Devils Sandbox" and both of these could be helpful resources or background for this group.

Meeting closes at 5:22 p.m.