

-MINUTES-

GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE ON VETERANS' SERVICES FULL COMMITTEE

Date: May 29, 2008

Place: Oregon Military Department

Time: 3:00 p.m.

In attendance: Amy Goodall, Mic Alexander, Jackie Moyer, Jim Keller, Mike Burton, Jerry Lorang, Jim Willis, Paula Brown, Tino Ornelas, Mike Caldwell, Erin Kelley-Siel, Jack Heims, Bruce Goldberg, Michelle Nelson, John Neese, Shelli' Honeywell, Mark Rassmussen, Mac MacDonald, J.D. Baucom, Scott Brewen, Kim Brockamp, Chane Griggs, Tom Mann, Jose Samaniego and Peggy McGuire.

Chair Paul Evans began the meeting with a brief review of the tour dates for the task force. He stated that there are still some issues that need to be clarified as far as places to hold Town Halls and other logistics. More information will be sent out soon. A few questions were raised regarding some of the tour locations as to how they would be facilitated. Evans stated that either himself or one of the sub-committee chairs would be designated for each of the stops, however all task force members at a meeting are to be open to questions and responding when able. Items that arise at meetings that cannot be answered then will have to be followed up on as quickly as possible.

The Chair then switched to the focus of the day's meeting – Vocational Rehab and Employment. He mentioned the various presenters who are in attendance and notes that the people from the VA Benefits program could not make it. He then introduced John Nees from the Department of Corrections and turned the floor over to him.

Mark Rassmussen and Shelli Honeywell spoke of how the deployments of Guard and Reserve Units impacted Oregon state employment and some of its policies. Much was learned by experience or trial and error. Some changes that have come from the deployments are changes in ORS as to veterans' preference for state hiring and changes in military leave policy and the ability for deployed to receive donations of leave time. Some other key issues that relate to the deployed employees are family medical leave, reemployment and decompression/reintegration issues.

John Nees then spoke to the group. He provided a hand out and discussed the practices and processes that DOC goes through when one of their staff is deployed. Below are some of the highlights.

Skills that service members learn via their military training are highly transferable to job skills needed at DOC.

Within Corrections they have specific core group of staff to oversee the process. The group contains a staff deployment specialist, Human Resources and Personnel staff. Pre-Deployment and Support for returning are key changes that this group addresses.

Currently, the only way that the employer (Corrections) learns about an employee going to be deployed is via the employee himself.

From experience they have developed new procedures and process and have also learned the importance of speaking with the family and discussing what will take place while they are away and when they come back. Hosting an open house for employees and their families helped reach families.

The handout shows the number of deployed staff that DOC has had out each year from 2000-2007 on military leave without pay.

Since January 2008 Corrections has begun tracking how many veterans are hired. Former employees sometimes are called back to help fill in when needed. They do not keep a list or database but this is information that could be pulled if needed in an emergency. May look into keeping something that is specific for their agency and positions.

Jack Heims took the floor to discuss a proposal for a central information source, one stop shopping point for all state employees. Bulletin-board-style postings. Jack stated that he has discussed with Jim Willis of ODVA and Director Willis agrees to look into hosting such a site.

Jack then went on to describe an idea for one of the outcomes from this Task Force being the forming of veterans' coordination councils (5 of them) that would contain various leaders from within each of the Regions. They would be responsible for overseeing services and addressing issues important to veterans.

Paul gave an update of New GI Bill legislation. Mike Caldwell brought up a question regarding the GI Bill. There is a former soldier who is attending a college out of state and pays out of state tuition. The thought is that since it is a state issue about which tuition is being charged that this could be changed in Oregon.

Paul allowed Director Willis of ODVA to share the just past legislation impacting qualified veterans mortgage bonds and how that helps the state veterans home loan program.

The meeting was then adjourned.