



S.V.A.C.

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date: 4 JUN 2013

Location: NG Aviation Facility, Concord

In Attendance:

Members:

Peter Burdett, Chairman, MOAA
Bobby Bronske, Vice Chairman, CVMA
Steph Riley, Secretary, NGANH
Rep. Robert Theberge
Benjamin Saxon, DAV
Ron Reilly, DAV
Al Grant, VVA
Raymond Goulet, VVA
Mike Horne, ROA
Ed Josephson, AFA
John Domenicis, Rolling Thunder
Diane Domenicis, Rolling Thunder
Joe Shea, MCL
Ray Hayes, AFSA
Frank Musmanno, NH Army Retiree Council
Mike Rice, NH Army Retiree Council
Susan Cuddy, Women Vets of America, Chp 41
Mary Morin, Women Vets of America, Chp 41
Mike Farinola, CVMA
Raymond Schwendeman, CVMA

Advisors:

(non-voting)

Peggy LaBrecque, NH Veterans Home
Jo Moncher, DHHS
Maj Gen William Reddel, TAG
Brig Gen Carolyn Protzmann, Dep Adj Gen
Amy Kennedy, Policy Advisor for Gov Hassan
Barry Conway, SAGE Emeritus

Guests:

Governor Maggie Hassan
Sarah Holmes for Senator Shaheen
Steve Monier for Senator Ayotte
Joshua Denton for Rep Shea-Porter
Michael Ollen for Rep McLane-Kuster
Howie Howe, HOTH
Karen McCarthy, Women Vets of America
Henry Pratte, Veterans Museum of NH
Col Paul Loiselle, Chief of Joint Staff NHNG
LTC Roy Hunter, President of NGANH
Judy Crockett, Manchester VAMC
Dan Marcek, VetFlix
Leigh Ann Shriver
MSgt William Bates, NHNGEA
MAJ Justin Strevig, Director of SMFS, NHNG
Mary Behnke, Women Vets Program Manager, NH VA
Leah Fox, Currier Museum of Arts
Patti Fowler
Sharyn Kelly, Women Vets of America
Andy Lacasse, WRJ VAMC
Amy Bassett, US Small Business Admin
Sherry ? , NH State Police

1. Open Meeting/ Call to order: Chairman, Pete Burdett convened the meeting at 5:00 p.m.

a. Pledge of Allegiance: P Burdett

Invocation:

b. Welcome/Remarks: Thanked everyone for taking time to be here. Welcomed Gov. Hassan to the meeting. Gave an update on Chair Emeritus, Griff Dalianis, who sends his greetings. He received the Distinguished Citizen of the Year award from the Elks of Nashua for his years of distinguished service to our veterans. Sage Emeritus

Approved

remarks from Barry Conway: missed the last meeting, pleased to be here and welcomed Gov Hassan. Says that retirement is going well.

c. Introduction of New Members/Guests/Visitors:

Leah Fox, Director of Public Programs at the Currier Museum of Art
Sherry ? , NH State Police
LTC Roy Hunter, President of NGANH
Sharyn Kelly, Women Vets of America volunteer

d. Secretary's Report: S Riley reported the presence of a quorum, making it an official meeting. The minutes from the MAY 2013 meeting were approved with a motion by M Horne, and a 2nd by B Saxon, unanimous vote to accept minutes.

e. Governor Hassan visit: each of the VSOs presented a short report on their organization's mission and the different activities they support.

[Gov Hassan]-thanked everyone for being here. Reminded everyone that when she was in the state senate, she was a senate representative to this committee so it is familiar turf. She was very grateful for that experience and grateful for those of you who continue to serve on it. She is a proud daughter of a WW II veteran and is very committed to veterans in her role as Governor. The VSO reports were a great reminder of the richness and diversity of our veteran community. In her first 6 months as Governor, she can say that it is the best job on earth because this state is such a great place to live and work. She has focused a lot in the budget on restoring critical services throughout the state; including making sure that the Veterans' Council has enough staff to work with veterans as they return. She wants to work with the Veterans' Home to restore more money to them so they can serve more veterans. Very proud of the Veteran's Count Program which has become a national model.

2. Old Business:

a. Legislative Committee- Ed Josephson: has sent out the LSR spreadsheet to everyone.

HB 399- NH Liberty Act. It passed the House 337 to 15; we decided to take a position to oppose it. Ed wrote testimony on his opposition which was read in the Senate. The NHNG had questions about the bill and had their legal folks look into it. The bill was ITL

[Protzmann]- The TAG doesn't usually take a stand on a bill unless our department sponsors it. With regard to the Liberty Act, the problem with it from a National Guard perspective is that we become criminally liable if we are federalized. The act itself prohibits material support and participation from the state of NH in connection with some aspects of the NDAA relative to detention and other support with regards to terrorist activities. As federal employees we are covered by the Torte Act but if we are mobilized by the state and perform duties related to this activity, we are not covered according to this legislation. It would make us criminally liable. Our military lawyers took a look at this and decided to bring our concerns to Sen. Carson to make her aware of the implications of the act.

HB 498- Firearms use in towns- was retained in committee

[Theberge]- was retained in the criminal justice committee. A majority of those members are new and didn't understand the nuances of it.

SB 47- relative to a surviving spouse's right to retain the Purple Heart plate. It is coming to the floor on 5 JUN. We have opposed it.

[Theberge]-it was special ordered to 5 JUN because Rep Baldasaro was out of the country for the original vote. The feeling is that it will pass.

SB 88- the Honor and Remember Flag. We have opposed it. It has been retained in committee. There was an amendment that was added to it that changed the bill. It would add other flags that could be recognized on special occasions.

[Theberge]-the Senate wants to put it on a House bill that the House wants to pass. We don't know which one they will put it on but whatever committee gets it is to notify me so we can have a discussion about it. Will have a committee of conference on it.

b. Veterans track for the NH Courts- (Burdett) Hoping to have Dr Potenza back to talk about veterans in the state prison. He is collecting data on veterans in the state prison system. Want to collect information on the county jails, too, to get a sense of what the cost is. Will look at the type of grant programs available. May call it a veterans' tract within the court system. Hoping to find ways to keep veterans out of jail and in treatment. Have talked about having a veteran designation on the state's drivers' licenses.

[Moncher]- six weeks ago 12 people went to DC to address the idea of establishing a veterans' court. It is a tough proposal because of limited resources. We may be able to tag it onto the mental health court program or drug court

program. There is a meeting on this subject tomorrow. The VA, the State Police Peer Support unit leader, a prosecutor, a public defender, and 2 superintendents from 2 of our county jails will be in the meeting. There will be a second meeting scheduled for July and Judge Nadeau will be attending that one as well as representation from SAMSHA. Hoping to have a stakeholders meeting before the end of the year where we will invite anyone that is interested to come and join the discussion. Hoping to develop a snapshot of what the issues are for prisoners: PTSD, substance abuse, etc. There are veterans courts located in 160 locations throughout 28 states. There is a lot of data out there that says this works and we are hoping to show how it could work for NH and save a lot of money for the state.

3. New Business:

a. Reports:

VA Advisory Committee for Women Veterans [Morin] - Mary attended a conference in DC regarding women veteran issues. She has been appointed to a 2 year term as the secretary for the Advisory Committee. Want to provide a strategic plan for long term care for female veterans. This will affect all veterans because there is currently no strategic plan for long term care for any veterans. The Small Business Administration is trying to entice women veterans into developing their own small businesses. Mary is astonished at how much attention is paid to the recommendations that are put forth from the Advisory Committee. Last year there were 12 recommendations that went forward and they have all been addressed. If anyone has any suggestions, please contact Mary Morin.

b. SVAC VP- M. Horne made a motion to close nominations for the position of SVAC VP, was seconded by B. Saxon. Motion made by E. Josephson to have the secretary cast the ballot for Bobby Bronske for the SVAC VP position, was seconded by A. Grant and passed with a unanimous vote. Bobby Bronske will serve as VP for another 2 year term.

c. Issues from the floor:

[Theberge]- Sen. Boutin and Rep Campbell serve on the Public Works and Highways committee. They have requested that SVAC approve the wording to go on a brass plaque on the Memorial Bridge in Portsmouth. "A memorial to the men and women of New Hampshire and Maine who have served in the United States military". The date on the plaque will be determined once it has passed through the House and Senate. Motion made by E. Josephson to accept the wording, seconded by A. Grant, passed unanimously.

[Burdett]- Discussion about changing the meeting location due to the expanding size of the committee attendees. Could go to the Veterans Home or Pease ANGB. Motion made to table the final discussion until the fall, was seconded and passed.

The Sept meeting is scheduled for the day after Labor Day, on 3 SEP. Discussion about changing the date to 10 SEP. Decided to keep the meeting on the original date, 3 SEP, and hold it in usual meeting place, the AASF in Concord.

[Theberge]- As an FYI legislatively, the House has 134 retained bills that have to be reported out by 22 NOV.

[Leah Fox from Currier Museum of Art]- has an exhibition on the "Visual Dispatches from the Vietnam War". Developing it in conjunction with a working group of Vietnam Veteran advisors who gave input on the interpretation and presentation of the exhibition. The exhibit is 35 photographs that illustrate the photography taken by the photojournalists that were on the battlefield documenting experiences of both civilians and soldiers. Looking at how visual images can and do change public perception of the war. The exhibit will start on 3 AUG and run until 11 NOV. Will send out a press release with more information. Also wanted to highlight that veterans, active military and immediate family have free admission to the Museum.

[Horne]- will welcome any suggestions or feedback on changing the time of the NH Veteran Cemetery Memorial Day ceremony from 1100 to later in the day. There was a comment made that it should be changed to later in the day.

[Farinola]- may have a donor in the seacoast area to provide funding a project. If you have something that you would want to recommend, contact Mike Farinola.

[Amy Bassett]- the Small Business Administration have a couple of big initiatives going on:
Boost to Business- 19-20 JUN for military members exiting active duty or transitioning out and looking to start a business or need help with an existing business - Veterans Lending Initiative- have 120 lenders throughout the country that have \$475 million that they are willing to lend.

d. National Legislative Staff Remarks: need to reach out to staffers for their updates

Sarah Holmes (Senator Shaheen):

SHAHEEN, AYOTTE: FUNDING SECURED FOR NEW HAMPSHIRE NATIONAL GUARD DEPLOYMENT CYCLE SUPPORT PROGRAM U.S. Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Kelly Ayotte (R-NH) today announced that the New Hampshire National Guard will receive \$535,000 to support the Guard's Deployment Cycle Support Program (DCSP). Shaheen and Ayotte have been strong advocates for the DCSP program and have worked with Pentagon officials to underscore the clear benefits of the program.

SHAHEEN INTRODUCES LEGISLATION TO ADDRESS EMERGING THREAT OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION Bill will specifically target immediate and growing danger posed by Middle East and North Africa U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) today introduced legislation to modernize the way the United States meets challenges posed by the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD's) around the globe. The bill, the Next Generation Cooperative Threat Reduction Act of 2013, will assist in developing an expanded and comprehensive cooperative threat reduction (CTR) strategy to target the immediate and growing challenges in one of the most critical regions to U.S. national security interests: the Middle East and North Africa.

SHAHEEN, AYOTTE WELCOME DECISION TO EXEMPT SHIPYARD WORKERS FROM FURLOUGHS Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Kelly Ayotte (R-NH), Chair and Ranking Member of the Senate Armed Services Readiness and Management Subcommittee, welcomed a Pentagon announcement today that declared "employees in Navy shipyards will be excepted from furlough," including those employees at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. On April 17, 2013, Senators Shaheen and Ayotte sent a letter to Secretary Hagel urging him to grant the Navy and Marine Corps the flexibility to move forward with their proposal to safely shift money from other accounts to avoid civilian furloughs. Senators Shaheen and Ayotte have also questioned multiple Navy and DoD officials at Senate Armed Services Committee hearings about the risks furloughs could pose to readiness

SHAHEEN, AYOTTE ANNOUNCE PEASE IS TOP CHOICE FOR KC-46A TANKER U.S. Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Kelly Ayotte (R-NH) announced today that the U.S. Air Force has selected Pease Air National Guard Base - home to the 157th Air Refueling Wing - as the top Air National Guard base to receive the new KC-46A tanker. Pending results of an environmental impact study, Pease will be the first Air National Guard unit to receive the next generation tanker.

SHAHEEN, FISCHER INTRODUCE NEW LEGISLATION TO ADDRESS MILITARY SEXUAL ASSAULT CRISIS Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Deb Fischer (R-NE) today introduced bipartisan legislation that would change the way the Pentagon designates sexual assault prevention officers, adding a new level of accountability and scrutiny to the position after multiple Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) officers were reportedly accused of sexual assault in recent weeks. Under the legislation, SAPR officers would become a more prominent position in the military requiring more rigorous screening and certification.

SHAHEEN, KLOBUCHAR, MURPHY INTRODUCE LEGISLATION TO HELP REDUCE DISABILITY CLAIMS BACKLOG AND VETERAN HOMELESSNESS THROUGH VETERANS LEGAL CLINICS Building on their continued efforts to support American veterans, U.S. Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Chris Murphy (D-CT) today introduced legislation to increase cooperation between the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and veterans legal clinics. The legislation, the Veterans Legal Support Act of 2013, will maximize the effectiveness of these law school programs and encourage their continued development.

SHAHEEN, MCCASKILL PROPOSE TOUGHER STANDARDS, SCREENINGS FOR DOD SEXUAL ASSAULT OFFICERS Building on their calls to prevent sexual assault in the military, U.S. Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Claire McCaskill (D-MO) today are calling on Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel to implement a more rigorous review process and standards for all Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) roles across every branch of the military. Their call follows alarming news reports of two SAPR personnel coming under investigation for sexual assault allegations and a damning Pentagon report citing that 26,000 military personnel had been the victims of unwanted sexual contact in 2012.

SHAHEEN: \$168,500 FOR MANCHESTER HOUSING AUTHORITY GRANT A STEP FORWARD FOR HOMELESS VETS A \$168,500 grant for the Manchester Housing & Redevelopment Authority will provide permanent housing to 20 homeless veterans and is a positive step forward to battling veterans homelessness in the state, U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) said today. The supportive housing assistance is provided through the HUD (U.S. Housing and Urban Development)-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program, which combines rental assistance from HUD with case management and clinical services provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

NEW HAMPSHIRE DELEGATION: VA SECRETARY WILL CONSIDER PART-TIME VETERANS CLINIC IN COLEBROOK AREA New Hampshire's congressional delegation welcomed news that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will begin meeting with health care providers in the Colebrook area to discuss establishing a part-time VA clinic. The VA's announcement, received in a letter to the delegation from Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki, came in response to repeated calls from Senators Shaheen and Ayotte and Congresswomen Kuster and Shea-Porter over the need to expand access to veterans healthcare in the North Country.

SHAHEEN PRESSES TOP MILITARY LEADERS ON FIGHT TO END SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THE MILITARY Continuing her efforts to end military sexual assault, U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen questioned top military leaders during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on their plans to address the sexual assault crisis in the United States Armed Forces. The hearing featured the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Chiefs of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard who testified on the rising rate of sexual assaults in the military and the necessary reforms to address this issue.

Steve Monier (Senator Ayotte):

May 1

In a letter to the president, Senators Lindsey Graham (R-SC), John McCain (R-AZ) and Senator Ayotte called for the release of the names of the Benghazi survivors.

"In light of your comments yesterday about the Benghazi attacks, we again request your Administration immediately provide the names of the Benghazi survivors to Congress so we can conduct interviews to gain a clearer understanding of what happened before, during, and after the attack.

"This information will allow Congress to meet its oversight obligations and will help ensure our government is taking the proper steps to protect American lives abroad and prevent future terrorist attacks."

May 2

Senator Ayotte sent a letter to Secretary of State John Kerry and Secretary of the Treasury Jack Lew requesting sanctions against Iran Air and Mahan Air to prohibit the continuation of illicit activity by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Hezbollah, and Iranian Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics (MODAFL).

Furthermore, the action aims to ensure that Iran does not acquire a nuclear weapons capability.

A section of the letter reads: "United States and European Union (EU) sanctions have taken a severe toll on Iran's economy as inflation rates have skyrocketed amid the rial's substantial depreciation. Despite increasing economic pressure, Tehran continues to pursue a nuclear weapons capability. American and European officials must continue to work together to further increase economic pressure to convince the regime in Tehran to honor its international obligations and halt its pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability.

The letter received 41 supporting signatures from other United States Senators.

May 7

As the Pentagon's annual report on sexual assault showed an alarming increase in cases, Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and Senator Ayotte introduced the Combating Military Sexual Assault (MSA) Act of 2013 (S. 871). In an effort to reduce sexual assaults within the military and help the victims of this crime, the Combating MSA Act would address a number of gaps within current law and policy and build upon the positive steps the Department of Defense (DoD) has taken in recent years. According to DoD estimates, there were about 19,000 cases of military sexual assault in 2011 alone. Of these, 3,192 were reported, leaving thousands of victims to face the aftermath alone as their assailants escape justice. That number rose to 26,000 cases in 2012 with less than 3,400 of those cases being reported.

May 10

Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Ayotte announced that the New Hampshire National Guard will receive \$535,000 to support the Guard's Deployment Cycle Support Program (DCSP). Shaheen and Ayotte have been strong advocates for the DCSP program and have worked with Pentagon officials to underscore the clear benefits of the program.

May 12

Senator Ayotte repeated her call on CBS's Face the Nation for a full-scale investigation by a select congressional panel into the Obama administration's actions before, during and after the attack on the U.S compound in Benghazi, Libya last October. Appearing on the CBS broadcast Face the Nation, Ayotte suggested that the investigation should include an examination of allegations that then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton may have approved a waiver of security requirements for the Benghazi compound.

Asked by program moderator Bob Schieffer whether she believes there was a cover-up by the Obama administration, Ayotte said numerous revisions to talking points about the attacks resulted in "very important" information being deleted.

"All you need to do is hold up the original version and then what was actually released to the public," Ayotte said. "I believe that the real question is were they manipulated ... in the middle of an election to not tell, really, the full story, give the picture to the American people. I think that's a serious question."

May 13

Senators McCain, Graham, and Ayotte participated in a press conference and released a statement on President Obama's comments on the attack against the U.S. Special Mission facility in Benghazi, Libya, that killed four brave Americans on September 11, 2012. In the press release, the Senators call for a Joint Select Committee to resolve contradictions and answer the many other unanswered questions about this tragedy.

May 14

Senator Shaheen and Senator Ayotte welcomed a Pentagon announcement that declared certain employees in Navy shipyards will be excepted from furlough, including many who work at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. According to the announcement, for those workers being furloughed, the furlough period will be reduced from 14 days to 11 days or fewer.

May 17

Senator Ayotte delivered remarks at the Veterans Count Seacoast Chapter Annual Dinner in Portsmouth. Retired Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen, whom Ayotte invited to the event, delivered the night's keynote address.

New Hampshire Veterans Count was developed in partnership with Easter Seals New Hampshire. The Seacoast Veterans Count Chapter is one of three chapters in the state that is devoted to helping support New Hampshire Veterans Count – the philanthropic arm of the DCSP. Ayotte has been a strong advocate in Washington for DCSP – a New Hampshire National Guard program that is designed to prepare and support service members and their families during the full cycle of mobilization, deployment, and reintegration.

May 22

Senators Ayotte and Shaheen announced that the U.S. Air Force selected Pease Air National Guard Base - home to the 157th Air Refueling Wing - as the top Air National Guard base to receive the new KC-46A tanker. Pending results of an environmental impact study, Pease will be the first Air National Guard unit to receive the next generation tanker. Shaheen and Ayotte have worked together over the past year and a half to highlight Pease's unique advantages and the impressive record of the New Hampshire Air National Guard's 157th Air Refueling Wing to Air Force officials. The criteria cited in the Air Force announcement closely reflect the advantages that both Senators have reiterated to Pentagon officials for over a year and a half - including Pease's successful existing active-duty association, low active duty manpower requirements, and strategic location in a region of high air refueling receiver demand. Pease successfully competed for the new tanker against 82 other installations and four other finalists.

Also on May 22, Senator Ayotte along with Senators Graham and McCain issued a press release pressing for more answers on the Benghazi attack. The release listed what we do know and what we still do not know about the attack on the U.S. Special Mission facility in Benghazi, Libya that killed four brave Americans on September 11, 2012.

May 23

Senator Ayotte joined Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) and 8 other Senators to introduce the Coast Guard STRONG Act (S. 1050). The Coast Guard Strong Act is intended to bring the Coast Guard up to par with the other military branches when it comes to a victim's ability to request a transfer away from his/her attacker.

May 24

Senator Ayotte attended the American Veterans Traveling Tribute (AVTT) Wall Ceremony for the Haverhill and Newbury 250th Anniversary Celebration. The AVTT recognizes veterans from World War II through the War on Terror, including the Fort Hood shooting victims and Blue Star Mothers. Additionally, the day is dedicated to recognizing first responders, including policeman, fire fighters, and emergency medical service members.

May 28

During a forum at the New Hampshire Institute of Politics, Stuart Bowen, Jr., the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR), praised bipartisan legislation introduced by Senator Ayotte aimed at keeping U.S. taxpayer dollars out of the hands of America's enemies.

The "Never Contract With the Enemy" Act, which is being cosponsored by Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), would expand and enhance successful provisions Ayotte and Senator Scott Brown (R-MA) included in the fiscal year 2012 National Defense Authorization Act that gave Pentagon contracting officials in the Central Command area of responsibility the ability to more expeditiously sever ties with contractors who funnel taxpayer resources to those who oppose the United States.

Approved

Also on May 28, Senator Ayotte made several local stops Thursday —Memorial Day — to honor those men and women have served the country and to offer encouragement to those who may someday also serve. In Derry, Ayotte addressed the hundreds of veterans and their families who attended an annual veterans' appreciation cookout sponsored by the Derry and Derry Village rotary clubs.

"Every generation has stepped forward and served this country," said Ayotte. "We only enjoy freedom because of the sacrifices of the men and women of this great country."

She added that is important to remember the 60,000 troops now serving in Afghanistan as well as the troops serving in other dangerous areas around the globe.

"Let's say a prayer for them to come home safely and as soon as possible," said Ayotte.

After speaking in Derry, Ayotte visited members of the Sea Cadets at the U.S. Naval Reserve Center in Londonderry.

Also on May 28, during a visit this week to Polartec's Hudson facility, Senator Ayotte learned about the military garments that the company makes for the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Special Forces. She toured the facility after meeting with CEO Gary Smith and members of Polartec's military team.

"The innovation that's happening at Polartec is helping to better equip our servicemen and women who are on the front lines. As a member of the Armed Services Committee, I was glad to learn more about the company's products and to meet with the New Hampshire employees who work there."

Also on May 28, Senator Ayotte attended the wake of 1LT Paul Michel Demeo, a West Point Grad, and active duty soldier who passed away on May 14, 2013, after participating in a 4-mile run at Fort Bragg.

May 30

During a special ceremony in her Nashua office, Senator Ayotte presented Boscawen resident German Sanchez with the Purple Heart medal in honor of his heroic actions during the Vietnam War.

An Army Private First Class in D Company, 3/8th Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, Sanchez was wounded in 1969, when his unit came under heavy assault. Despite being wounded, he risked his own safety to aid a fellow soldier and refused to be evacuated from the battle.

June 3

Senator Ayotte, along with New Hampshire's congressional delegation welcomed news that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will begin meeting with health care providers in the Colebrook area to discuss establishing a part-time VA clinic. The VA's announcement, received in a letter to the delegation from Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki, came in response to repeated calls from Senators Shaheen and Ayotte and Congresswomen Kuster and Shea-Porter over the need to expand access to veterans healthcare in the North Country.

Josh Denton (Congresswoman Shea-Porter):

- . Congresswoman spoke at the NH Veterans Home and the NH State Veterans Cemetery Memorial Day events.
- . This past Friday, the Congresswoman presented WWII medals to a veteran that never received them.
- . Starting next Wednesday, at American Legion Post 70 in Seabrook, our office is going to start holding a series of 'Open Office Hours'

Newly Passed legislation that she Co-sponsored:

H.R. 1344 Helping Heroes Fly Act

Summary: to direct the Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security (Transportation Security Administration) to provide expedited air passenger screening to severely injured or disabled members of the Armed Forces and severely injured or disabled veterans, and for other purposes.

Newly Passed legislation that she Voted for:

H.R. 1412 Improving Job Opportunities for Veterans Act

Summary: To improve and increase the availability of on-job training and apprenticeship programs carried out by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

H.R. 570 American Heroes COLA Act

Summary: to provide for annual cost-of-living adjustments to be made automatically by law each year in the rates of disability compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of certain service-connected disabled veterans, and for other purposes.

H.R. 258 The Stolen Valor Act of 2013

Summary: Amends the federal criminal code to rewrite provisions relating to fraudulent claims about military service to subject to a fine, imprisonment for not more than one year, or both an individual who, with intent to obtain money, property, or other tangible benefit, fraudulently holds himself or herself out to be a recipient of.

Approved

Will vote on this week:

H.R. 671 The Ruth Moore Sexual Trauma

Latest Action: Forwarded by the subcommittee to the full committee

Summary: To improve the disability compensation evaluation procedure of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for veterans with mental health conditions related to military sexual trauma, and for other purposes.

Michael Ollen (Congresswoman McLane-Kuster):

On May 9, Rep. Kuster cosponsored **H.R. 333, the *Disabled Veterans Tax Termination Act***. Introduced by Rep. Sanford Bishop (D-GA), this legislation would permit retired members of the Armed Forces who have a service-connected disability rated less than 50 percent to receive concurrent payment of both retired pay and veterans' disability compensation.

On May 9, Rep. Kuster cosponsored **H.R. 258, the *Stolen Valor Act***. Introduced by Rep. Joe Heck (R-NV), this legislation would amend the federal criminal code to impose stricter penalties on individuals who use fraudulent military decorations for monetary gain.

On May 9, Rep. Kuster cosponsored **H.R. 164, to permit veterans with service-related disabilities to travel on military aircraft**. Introduced by Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), this legislation would permit veterans who have a service-connected, permanent disability rated as total to travel on military aircraft in the same manner and to the same extent as retired members of the Armed Forces

On May 14, 2013, Rep. Kuster helped introduce **H.R. 1980, the *Quicker Veterans Benefits Delivery Act***. This bill would require VA to maximize the use of private medical evidence. It amends title 38, United States Code, section 5103A(d)(1) to provide that, when a claimant submits private medical evidence, including a private medical opinion, that is competent, credible, probative, and otherwise adequate for rating purposes, the Secretary shall not request a VA medical examination.

On May 22, 2013, Rep. Kuster helped introduce **H.R. 2088, the *Adjudication Centers of Excellence Act***. Introduced by Veterans' Affairs Committee Ranking Member Mike Michaud (D-ME), this legislation will create a pilot that will utilize the highest performing offices to adjudicate the most difficult medical conditions such as PTSD and TBI, with the belief that office's specializing in specific medical conditions will create timely efficiencies and increase the accuracy of those ratings.

On May 22, 2013, Rep. Kuster helped introduce **H.R. 2086, the *Pay As You Rate Act***. Introduced by Rep. Dina Titus (D-NV), this legislation would direct the VA, prior to adjudicating a claim which requires decisions with respect to two or more disabilities, to make interim payments based on any disability for which the Secretary has already made a decision. This would allow veterans to start receiving at least a portion of their benefits earlier while waiting for the VA to finish reviewing their entire claim.

On May 24, 2013, Rep. Kuster cosponsored **H.R. 690, the *Reserve Retirement Deployment Credit Correction Act***. Introduced by Rep. Tom Latham, this legislation would require the days of active duty or active service used to reduce the minimum age at which a member of the reserves may retire for reserve service to occur in in any two consecutive fiscal years, instead of in the same fiscal year.

LETTERS

On May 17, 2013, Rep. Kuster sent a bipartisan letter to the House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Jeff Miller (R-FL) and Ranking Member Michael Michaud (D-ME) requesting a hearing on sexual assault in the military and the VA's efforts to meet needs of veteran survivors of military sexual trauma.

On May 22, 2013, Rep. Kuster joined her colleagues on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee in sending a bipartisan letter to President Obama urging him to ending the bureaucratic back and forth on veterans' records, which is negatively affecting veteran's disability claims, and potentially their health.

On May 23, 2013, Rep. Kuster joined a group of bipartisan colleagues led by Reps. Mike Coffman (R-CO) and Patrick Murphy (D-FL) in sending a letter to President Obama urging him to become directly involved in ending the VA backlog.

MEETINGS/EVENTS

On May 24, 2013, Rep. Kuster attended the grand opening of the new Manchester Vet Center in Hooksett.

On May 27, 2013, Rep. Kuster attended the Memorial Day ceremony at the New Hampshire State Veterans Home.

Approved

On May 30, 2013, Rep. Kuster attended the Memorial Day ceremony hosted by the Marine Corps League at the New Hampshire State Veterans Cemetery.

On June 2, 2013, Rep. Kuster attended a bridge dedication ceremony to name a bridge in Pelham after Sgt. Daniel Gionet who passed away while serving his country in Iraq in 2006.

4. Misc. / Announcements / Calendar Items:

13 JUN at 1700- Northeast POW demo motorcycle ride during bike week in Gilford

15-17 JUN- Rotary Rock'n Ribfest (Veterans Count) Merrimack

Make Sure it's Me- a play by Kate Wenner show dates: JUN 1-2, 7-9, 21-23

3 AUG- Northern NE Military Retiree Day- NH Aviation Facility- 0800-1300, opening ceremony at 0900

5. Motion to adjourn 1st J Shea, 2nd B Saxon and the meeting ended at 1855.

Next meeting date: 3 SEP 2013 (Regularly the 1st Tue at 1700) Location: NG Aviation Facility - Concord, NH

Respectfully submitted,

Steph Riley
Secretary