



S.V.A.C.

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date: 1 OCT 2013

Location: NG Aviation Facility, Concord

In Attendance:

<u>Members:</u> Peter Burdett, Chairman, MOAA Bobby Bronske, Vice Chairman, CVMA Steph Riley, Secretary, NGANH Rep. Robert Theberge Bill Roy, AMLEGION Benjamin Saxon, DAV Ron Reilly, DAV Patti Fowler, MOPH Kenith Chase, MOPH Al Grant, VVA Raymond Goulet, VVA Mike Horne, ROA Ken Lull, MOAA Kevin Grady, AFA Ed Josephson, AFA John and Diane Domenicis, Rolling Thunder Joe Shea, MCL Mike Rice, NH Army Retiree Council Russell Bilodeau, CWV	<u>Advisors:</u> (non-voting) Brig Gen Carolyn Protzmann, NHNG Peggy LaBrecque, NH Veterans Home Joseph DiChiaro, Chaplain Amy Kennedy, Policy Advisor for Gov. Hassan <u>Guests:</u> Lisa Aldridge, NHTAA Henry Pratte, Vets Museum of NH Stella Lareau, Manchester VAMC Dan Marcek, VetFlix Cate Sementa, Harbor Homes SSVF Angela Roberts, Harbor Homes SSVF Becki Malandrino, Easter Seals Mil & Vet Svcs Andy LaCasse, WRJ VAMC Bob Baker, AMVETS Whitney Blethen, Beacon Hospice Sheri Avena, Beacon Hospice Ernie Sulloway, DAV
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1. Open Meeting/ Call to order: Chairman, Pete Burdett convened the meeting at 1700.

a. Pledge of Allegiance: P Burdett

Invocation: J DiChiaro

b. Welcome/Remarks: Thanked attendees for coming to the Veterans Home for the meeting. Thanked the Veterans Home for hosting, is impressed with the quality of the Veterans Home. Introduced the commandant, Peggy LaBrecque, who introduced 2 residents that are council members for the Home: Roger Paris, a WWII Marine veteran who is President of the Council and Richard Millyaro, an Army Vietnam veteran who serves as Sgt at Arms. Pointed out that the CODEL staffers were not in attendance due to the government shutdown. Passed around the VA's Field Guide to the shutdown which outlined the programs that were exempt and the ones that would be affected. Gave update that SAGE Emeritus, Barry Conway, was travelling and couldn't attend and Chair Emeritus, Griff Dalianis, was still having health issues.

c. Introduction of New Members/Guests/Visitors:

Angela Roberts, Harbor Homes SSVF

Ernie Sulloway, DAV Chap 19, Vice Commander

Whitney Blethen, Veteran to Veteran Program for Beacon Hospice

Approved

Sheri Avena, Veteran to Veteran Program for Beacon Hospice
Becki Malandrino, Easter Seals Mil & Vet Svcs

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

2. Old Business:

a. Legislative Committee- Ed Josephson: right now there are 17 LSR's, they have titles only. Not all of the LSR's have been published yet.

4 of them have been submitted by Rep. Theberge.

H-2335 deals with adopting the interstate compact on educational support for military children. NH is one of 4 states and the only New England state that doesn't honor the compact.

H-2336 honoring the symbolism and significance of the United States flag. At the national level are trying to recognize and honor the flag. The Supreme Court says that flag burning is a freedom of speech. We feel that the flag should be respected. Want to send a resolution to the CODEL.

H-2337 recognizing the honor and remember flag as a symbol of the service and sacrifice of the armed forces. The family can buy the flag, fly it at home, it can be flown at the cemetery. Would not be flown at the State House on holidays.

H-2397 urging Congress to support a state-wide veteran's medical identification card. Have had several meetings with the CODEL. There is a need for a medical veteran's ID card. Working with the VA at national level. At the next meeting will have WRJ and Manchester VA reps discuss this. Would be a pilot program. There is one in Maine but there are a lot of stipulations so it hasn't worked very well.

LSRs submitted by Rep. Baldasaro:

H-2358 urging Congress to fund the development and implementation of a comprehensive health care system for New Hampshire veterans.

H-2360 naming a bridge in Derry after Lance Corporal Michael E. Geary

H-2361 Gold Star and Blue Star Mothers Service Flags and the Silver Star Service Flag

The rest include two on the use of drones; two are related to the control of firearms; one relates to Bronze Star/ Silver Star license plates; one involves the deployment of National Guard troops; a couple relate to property tax exemptions for vets; and one deals with the smoking policy for NH Veteran Home residents.

b. DCS-CCP and Veterans Count update- Col Loiselle couldn't attend due to the shutdown.

[Burdett]- the program provides support for those getting ready to deploy, those deployed and for post-deployers that have issues. It is free and confidential. Chrystn Fisher is the intake coordinator that takes the referral and assigns a care coordinator to the service member who provides one-on-one support. Since 2007 there have been no suicides among any of the participants in the program and care coordinators have been able to intervene 64 times in high risk situations.

[Becky Malandrino]- Easter Seals is trying to open up in all areas of veterans support. Partnering with the DCSP-CCP program, Harbor Homes SSVF program (which serves veterans of all eras). The Veterans Count program is growing, now in Portsmouth, Manchester and Nashua. Always looking for folks to join the Board and for fundraising opportunities. Upcoming events: 23 OCT is the Vets Count breakfast at the Radisson in Manchester at 0730. 10 NOV is the 2nd annual gala event in Nashua.

c. SSVF Update- Cate Sementa, Program Manager Harbor Homes- is a short term intensive case management program to get housing for service members. The shutdown will not impact operations. If we can't get help for the service members, will get them linked up to the resources that will. Have served 180 households to include 340 members in the households. Have given over \$182,000 in financial assistance.

d. Veterans Home update- Peggy LaBrecque, Commandant- has been around since 1890 when Maj Charles Tilton worried about service members that didn't have a place to go. He donated the land at \$1 per acre. The first commandant was married to a nurse which was probably the reason why he was selected. Currently have a budget that supports 200 veterans, have 195 vets in residence, have 250 beds in the facility. Have a women's wing and a dementia unit. All of the upgrades are 65% federally funded and 35% state matched. Working on electronic charting for better continuity of care. Want medication changes to be accomplished within 30 minutes. Have been approved for capital projects budget equipment upgrades. The kitchen needs an upgrade and the secure care/ wander guard system needs to be replaced.

The Board of Managers meeting is being held on 21 OCT to discuss the smoking policy at the Veterans Home. We are a nursing home and we care about the residents. We worry about the residents that are on oxygen and we don't want to make the state liable for any accidents that may happen. We have looked at the application pool and 99%

are already non-smokers. The 9 or 10 that do smoke have been grandfathered in. If people do smoke and they apply to the Home, they will need to go on a cessation program.

3. New Business:

a. Reports:

-Manchester VA Mental Health Summit- Stella Lareau- there were 54 attendees, 43 were outside of the VA. Included a veteran outreach panel, suicide prevention council members, PTSD commission, women's health services, etc. Planning on developing a community mental health partnership. Hoping to have an annual event.

-Dept of VA News Release- VA announces award of Patient Centered Community Care. Looking to expand access to care to outside community medical resources. Will ask Mike Green, Concord Hospital CEO, to attend the DEC meeting.

[Lareau]-implementation of the PCCC will hit the VISN in April 2014. There are two contracted services that will be used: Health Net Fed Services LLC and Triwest. Does not include contracting out for primary care, need to see VA PCP's to get referred out for the specialty services.

b. Ideas:

-We Honor Veterans- The Vet to Vet Program for Beacon Hospice- Whitney Blethen- the goal is to work with patients that have a terminal disease and have 6 months or less to live. Are seeing more veteran hospice patients. Have a need for veteran volunteers, also want to be more involved in veteran groups in the community. For the veteran program, do an intake form that includes a military history checklist. Want to match the veteran patient with an appropriate veteran volunteer. Want to honor their service by presenting them with a star from the American flag. Want to outreach to vets in the community. There will be a Veteran's Day article in the Portsmouth Herald featuring a volunteer and a patient.

-2013 Veteran Amputee Golf Classic- Ken Lull-Veteran Amputee Golf Association supports veteran amputees that want to golf. Tournament to be held 19 OCT 2013 at 0630 at the Loudon Country Club

-NOV SVAC meeting- will need to approve the annual report. Ed Josephson will be working on putting it together. Send inputs for the report to him.

-Vetflix event- Dan Marcek continues to make veteran history films, is working with Commandant LaBrecque to put on 2 shows on 14 NOV at the Veterans Home. The first show will be held at 1430 and will honor WWII and Korean vets. The second show will be held at 1630 and will honor the active duty SeaBees. The shows are open to veterans, families and the general public. Will be sending out emails and more details.

[Burdett]- also wanting to have Dan work with the Currier Museum Vietnam Vet display to put it on a CD. Want to find a sponsor to support the program

-WRJ VA update- Andy Lacasse- several new programs have started at the VA: ophthalmology program to begin, won't have to go to Boston for cataract surgery. A sleep study program to be starting, were the only VA that didn't have one. Have contracted for a PET scanner to come to the facility one day a week. Will be celebrating its 75th anniversary during 4-11 NOV. Have been working the best we ever have with the Manchester VA to make sure the veterans get the best care.

Gov Hassan update- Amy Kennedy-the Gov has concerns about how the shutdown will impact service members in the state. Also concerned about the impact to state programs that haven't been funded. Gov sent out a press release regarding the shutdown

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

Sarah Holmes (Senator Shaheen):

SHAHEEN STATEMENT ON GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

(Washington, DC) – U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) released the following statement on the federal government shutdown:

"The consequences of a government shutdown are very real for families and small businesses in New Hampshire and across the country. I'm incredibly disappointed that we have come to this point that was entirely avoidable.

"I know people in New Hampshire are frustrated with Washington and I share their frustration. This Congress can do better and it's time for the dysfunction and obstructionism to come to an end. I hope we can quickly pass a short-term spending bill and resume bipartisan efforts to negotiate a long-term spending agreement and deficit-reduction plan immediately because that's what the American public expects of us. We can't afford any more manufactured crises that hurt our economy and so many families."

NH DELEGATION REQUESTS UPDATE ON ACCESS TO VA CARE FOR NORTH COUNTRY VETERANS

WASHINGTON, D.C. – In a letter to Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki, U.S. Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Kelly Ayotte (R-NH), and Reps. Carol Shea-Porter (NH-01) and Ann McLane Kuster (NH-02), requested an update on the VA's consideration of a telehealth partnership with Androscoggin Valley Hospital and a part-time VA clinic to better serve veterans in New Hampshire's North Country.

"We are grateful to hear that White River Junction Director Deborah Amdur recently visited Androscoggin Valley Hospital," the letter said. "We are encouraged about the possibility of better serving our North Country veterans with a telehealth partnership and a part-time VA clinic. We ask that you please provide an update on the VA's progress regarding these important priorities."

In response to the delegation's concerns about the current challenges North Country veterans face in accessing VA medical care, Secretary Shinseki recently acknowledged the need to address the current gap and indicated the agency would consider co-locating a part-time VA clinic in the North Country.

Currently, veterans residing in the North Country must undergo a long and sometimes difficult drive to the nearest clinics in Littleton and Conway in order to receive care. For more specialized care, they currently must travel to the VA Medical Center in White River Junction, Vermont.

DELEGATION LETTER TO SECRETARY SHINSEKI:

Dear Secretary Shinseki:

We have shared with you our concerns regarding the challenges New Hampshire's North Country veterans face in accessing VA medical care and the steps we believe the VA can take to address those challenges. In response to some of these concerns, in a May 24, 2013 letter, you wrote that the VA is aware of a "potential gap in care access for veterans" in the Colebrook region of New Hampshire's North Country and intends to "explore potential co-location of a part-time VA clinic" in the North Country to enhance veterans' access to medical care.

Additionally, at an April 23, 2013 Senate Budget Committee hearing, Undersecretary for Health Robert A. Petzel testified that the VA might be interested in setting up a health contract agreement with Androscoggin Valley Hospital. He also promised to follow-up on VA plans to establish a telehealth technology partnership to better serve veterans in the North Country.

We are grateful to hear that White River Junction Director Deborah Amdur recently visited Androscoggin Valley Hospital. We are encouraged about the possibility of better serving our North Country veterans with a telehealth partnership and a part-time VA clinic. We ask that you please provide an update on the VA's progress regarding these important priorities.

We appreciate your continued attention to these issues and the VA's efforts to ensure that New Hampshire veterans have access to the care they need and deserve. Thank you for your service to our country and to our veterans. We look forward to hearing from you.



Lawmakers seek fix to extend visa program for Iraqi interpreters By Jeremy Herb -

Lawmakers are looking for a last-minute legislative fix to extend a visa program for Iraqis who served as interpreters for the U.S. military during the Iraq War.

The program for Iraqis to receive special immigrant visas to come to the United States is slated to expire on Sept. 30 unless Congress passes a measure to continue it.

Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.) and several senior senators are looking for a way to pass a one-year extension amid the legislative fight over funding the government, which is also facing a Sept. 30 deadline.

Shaheen filed an amendment to the Senate's continuing resolution (CR) to extend the program for a year, but that looked unlikely to be added to the bill, a Senate aide said.

Shaheen and her allies — Sens. John McCain (R-Ariz.), Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) and Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) — have also filed a stand-alone bill they are now seeking to get approved in the Senate by unanimous consent.

The visa extension was included in the immigration bill that the Senate passed earlier this year, but that effort has stalled in the House.

Rep. Adam Kinzinger (R-Ill.) had pushed unsuccessfully to include an amendment to extend the Iraqi visa program in the House-passed CR.

A House aide said that House lawmakers are now waiting to see what happens in the Senate.

"The Senate CR is probably the first, best avenue, and other avenues are also being explored in case that doesn't work out," the aide said.

Kinzinger said he was confident that it could get passed in the House if the Senate approves it by unanimous consent.

"When you talk to people I don't think anybody would oppose this," he said. "When somebody puts their life on the line for our country, they ought to be repaid."

The lawmakers argue that the visa program, which began in 2007, should be continued because there are still interpreters in Iraq who were told they would get visas for helping the U.S. military.

"We made a promise to thousands of Iraqi civilians who risked their lives helping our country during a time of war and now we must honor our commitment," Shaheen said in a statement provided to The Hill. "Extending the special immigrant visa program by a year is the right thing to do."

Steve Monier (Senator Ayotte):

September 4

Senator Ayotte participated in a classified briefing in the Senate Armed Services Committee focusing on President Obama's request for an authorization to use military force in Syria.

September 11

On the first anniversary of the Benghazi attacks Senators Ayotte and Graham wrote a letter to FBI Director James Comey on the pursuit of the perpetrators of the Benghazi attacks. The letter reads in part:

"We are pleased to hear that the United States government has finally filed charges against a number of suspects allegedly responsible for the murder of four brave Americans in Benghazi. Although filing charges is a step in the right direction, we are deeply troubled that the individuals who have the blood of Americans on their hands remain at large a year after the terrorist attack. We believe justice and America's national security interests demand that the FBI redouble its efforts to bring the terrorists into custody.... We expect the administration to make clear that future U.S. assistance to the Libyan government will depend on their willingness to work with us to bring the Benghazi terrorists into custody.... We must not leave terrorists with the impression that they can kill Americans and escape the consequences."

Senators Ayotte and Graham wrote a similar letter to Libyan President Nuri Abu Sahmayn. It reads in part:

"We write to urge the Libyan government to fully cooperate with the United States government and take all possible steps to bring the suspects into custody.... We are strong advocates for the bilateral relationship between our two countries. However, a lack of cooperation by the Libyan government in bringing the Benghazi suspects into custody could threaten our relationship in the future. If your government lacks information regarding the identity or whereabouts of the suspects—or lacks the capabilities to bring them into custody—we urge you to request the necessary information or assistance from the U.S. government."

The same day, Sen. Ayotte appeared on Greta Van Susteren's On the Record. She told Greta that if the letters are ignored, "We're going to continue, absolutely, pushing this because this is a matter of the President following through on what he said - bringing these terrorists to justice... We have the ability to put pressure on the Libyan government...and we can hold up their aid if they're not going to cooperate with us."

Also on September 11, Sen. Ayotte released a statement announcing that she would not support the president's request for authorization of force in Syria:

"In reflecting on the president's speech last night and the many briefings I have received on Syria, despite my best attempts to discern it, I am left with the conclusion that the administration's strategy on Syria is incoherent and inconsistent. While I believe we have important strategic interests in the region, I could not at this time support committing U.S. military force in Syria in the absence of a well thought out strategy and plan to achieve definable military objectives that are consistent with our national security interests and those of our allies."

September 12

Senator Ayotte presented U.S. Navy veteran and Londonderry resident Leonard Evans with six service medals at a ceremony. Evans, who retired a petty officer third class, completed four tours in Vietnam. He received the Navy Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal for service in Korea, Vietnam Service Medal with one silver star and one bronze star appurtenance, Korean Defense Service Medal and Vietnam Campaign Medal with 1960 device.

Also on September 12, Senators John Cornyn, Ayotte, Susan Collins, Ted Cruz, and Jerry Moran introduced the Honoring the Fort Hood Heroes Act (S. 1500). The bill would declare that the attack at Fort Hood was an act of terrorism (not "workplace violence"), that the government has a fundamental duty to protect our troops, that Nidal Hasan was principally motivated by an ideology of violent Islamist extremism, and that Hasan proved himself to be a terrorist and a traitor. If passed, the bill would provide certain benefits by applying laws and regulations used for service members in a combat zone or supporting a contingency operation to the victims of the attack. The eligible benefits, currently withheld, would include combat-related special compensation, maximum coverage under Service members' Group Life Insurance, tax breaks due to death in a terrorist attack, special pay for subjection to hostile fire, combat-related injury rehabilitation pay, and meals at military treatment facilities. The bill was referred to the Armed Services Committee.

Also on September 12, Senators Cruz, Ayotte, and 21 other Republicans introduced S.Res. 225, a resolution in support of establishing a joint select committee to investigate and report on the Benghazi attack of September 11, 2012. The resolution highlights the fact that "the Department of State's lack of adequate cooperation has prevented congressional committees from properly investigating and receiving direct testimony on behalf of Benghazi survivors."

September 13

Senator Ayotte led a letter to Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew. The letter was joined by Senators Richard Blumenthal, Jeanne Shaheen, and John Cornyn. The letter urges Sec. Lew to "designate" the offending Russian banks, which means to enforce sanctions that would prevent the offending Russian banks from doing business in the United States. It reads in part:

"Russian bank support violates international sanctions by enabling Syria to pay for imports and receive funds for exports. This assistance eases much of the financial burden on the Assad regime, allowing it to continue military purchases and pay the soldiers that sustain the war in Syria.... It is now more critical than ever that you swiftly designate those financial institutions that have profited from violating sanctions to prop up the Syrian regime."

Also on September 13, Senator Ayotte toured the Queen City firm, Mentis Science. Among its many projects, the company assists missile defense development through its giant, one-of-a-kind composite carbon fiber braiding machine that is used to wrap the company's own advanced composite material around the nose cone of a navy interceptor missile. Recently, the company won a contract with Israel to make the material for radomes, a missile's equivalent of a windshield, winning it over much larger companies including Raytheon. The contract is part of David's Sling, an Israel Defense Forces military system designed to intercept medium- to long-range missiles.

After an August hearing to investigate serious problems within the Joint Prisoner of War/Missing in Acting Accounting Command (JPAC) and the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO), Senators Ayotte and McCaskill sent a follow-up letter to Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel. It reads in part:

"The hearing revealed that the Department has never had a comprehensive plan to delineate the responsibilities and roles of the components within the accounting community. While we were encouraged to hear that DMPO and JPAC have finally begun work on the long overdue plan, we were concerned to hear that the plan was still in 'coordination.' We were also troubled to learn that the Department's approach to accounting may be doing families more harm than good by failing to provide them with a realistic assessment of the possibility of identifying missing service members."

September 16

Senator Ayotte joined Senator Cornyn, seven other Senators and 23 Congressmen, in a letter to Attorney General Eric Holder on allegations of criminal activity by one or more government officials within the Army's Non-Standard Rotary Wing Aircraft (NSRWA) Project Management office. This office lead's DoD's troubled Mi-17 helicopter program. The Mi-17s are Russian aircraft sold by Rosoboronexport to DoD for use by the Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) in Afghanistan. According to an August 29, 2013 Reuters report, NSRWA may be guilty of improper payments to Russian companies for Mi-17 overhauls, as well as problematic personal ties with these foreign entities. On a per aircraft basis, the Army is paying Rosoboronexport more than double what the Russian military itself is paying right now to buy nearly identical helicopters. The letter urges Sec. Holder to "utilize all available resources, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, to support any criminal investigation into these matters."

September 17

In the wake of the September 16 tragedy at the Washington Navy Yard, U.S. Senator Kelly Ayotte called for a hearing in the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee (SHSGAC) to examine federal contractor hiring practices at military installations. She sent a letter to SHSGAC Chairman Tom Carper and Ranking Member Tom Coburn. It reads in part:

"While any instance of lawbreaking by a service member or government contractor with a security clearance warrants scrutiny, this case is particularly disturbing given Alexis's pattern of troubling behavior.... we must move quickly to fully understand contracting hiring practices at military installations to ensure that federal contractors are qualified, fit to serve, and don't pose a danger to the workforce, or our national security." [The following day, Sen. Ayotte also called on Senators Reid and McConnell to bring to the floor the bipartisan Mental Health Awareness and Improvement Act, which includes key provisions of the Begich-Ayotte Mental Health First Aid Act]

Also on September 17, Senators Coburn, Ayotte, and an array of nine other bipartisan members reintroduced the Audit the Pentagon Act (S. 1510). The bill provides incentives for DoD, which is the only federal agency that has never fully complied with financial management laws, to meet its audit schedule while also instituting consequences for further failure to follow the law. Secretary Hagel has affirmed his commitment to achieving audit-ready budget statements by the end of 2014, stating that he 'will do everything he can to fulfill this commitment' and confirming that auditable financial statements are essential."

September 19

Senator Ayotte sent a letter to Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus, asking him to explain the circumstances surrounding Navy Yard shooter Aaron Alexis' discharge from the Navy in 2011. The letter reads in part: "Alexis had a series of conduct-related issues with military and civilian authorities - including insubordination, disorderly conduct and unauthorized absence from work. I ask that you provide a list of Alexis' offenses and the circumstances under which he was administratively punished prior to his discharge. Additionally, I request confirmation about whether the Navy originally sought a general discharge of Alexis and the grounds for that action, and an explanation as to why the Navy granted an honorable discharge in 2011."

Approved

September 23

Senator Ayotte led a letter with the rest of the New Hampshire Delegation (Shaheen, Kuster, and Shea-Porter) to VA Secretary Eric Shinseki on the continued lack of medical care for North Country veterans. The letter reads in part: "[I]n a May 24, 2013 letter, you wrote that the VA is aware of a 'potential gap in care access for veterans' in the Colebrook region of New Hampshire's North Country and intends to 'explore potential co-location of a part-time VA clinic' in the North Country.... Additionally, at an April 23, 2013 Senate Budget Committee hearing, Undersecretary of Health Robert A. Pretzel testified that the VA might be interested in setting up a health contract agreement with Androscoggin Valley Hospital.... We ask that you please provide an update on the VA's progress."

September 25

Senator Ayotte placed a hold on Deborah Lee James's nomination for Secretary of the Air Force. Sen. Ayotte met privately with Ms. James on September 18. Ms. James appeared before a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on September 19. The Senator is blocking the nomination until her questions are answered regarding potential cuts to the A-10 Thunderbolt attack aircraft. Some sources have reported that the Air Force is considering cutting the entire A-10 fleet. [Senator Ayotte's official statement on the A-10 follows]:

"As Ranking Member of the Armed Services Readiness Subcommittee, Senator Ayotte's central concern is that our troops – including New Hampshire servicemen and women serving in harm's way – have the close air support they need to safely accomplish their missions. The A-10 airframe is credited with saving 60 American lives this summer in Afghanistan, and Senator Ayotte wasn't getting the answers she had requested from the Air Force about whether it intends to prematurely eliminate this aircraft before there is a replacement aircraft that will ensure there isn't a capability gap that could put our troops at risk. We understand the Air Force is in the process of responding to the Senator's questions, and when she receives a substantive response she will release the hold on Ms. James' nomination."

September 28

Senator Ayotte attended the annual POW/MIA Ceremony with the New Hampshire VFW. The ceremony was held at the State Veterans Cemetery in Boscawen.

Josh Denton (Congresswoman Shea-Porter): no report received

Michael Ollen (Congresswoman McLane-Kuster):

LEGISLATION SPONSORED/COSPONSORED

On August 2, 2013, Rep. Kuster cosponsored **H.R. 1284, the Veterans Medical Access Act**. Introduced by Representative Julia Brownley (D-CA), this bill would improve travel benefits for blind and severely disabled. It would extend travel reimbursements for inpatient care to catastrophically disabled non-service connected veterans with low vision or legal blindness, with a spinal cord injury or disorder, or with double or multiple amputations whose travel is in connection with receipt of VA hospital rehabilitative care at specialized Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) or Blind Rehabilitation Centers (BRC), or a prosthetics rehabilitation center.

On September 28, 2013, Rep. Kuster helped the House pass the **Pay The Troops Act** which would keep payments to active duty military personnel online in the event of a possible government shutdown.

LETTERS

On September 19, 2013, Rep. Kuster signed a letter to President Obama led by Rep. Cheri Bustos (D-IL) urging the president to deem certain Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employees as "essential" in the event of a government shutdown, so that veterans can continue to receive VA benefits.

On September 23, 2013, Rep. Kuster joined the rest of the delegation in signing a letter to Sec. Shinseki urging him to address the challenges faced by our North Country veterans through the addition of an access clinic in the Colebrook area.

MEETINGS/EVENTS

During the August recess, Congresswoman Kuster held several meetings with service members and veterans aimed at increasing access to VA care and addressing current issues such as military sexual trauma.

On August 13, Rep. Kuster met with members of the National Guard, veterans, survivors of military sexual assault, and community partners during a roundtable discussion on military sexual trauma.

Approved

On August 20, Rep. Kuster met with homeless veterans at The Bridge House in Plymouth. She also toured the facility and discussed the planned Soldier On project which would provide 50 permanent units for homeless veterans. Leading the discussions were Alex Ray and Cathy Bentwood.

On August 20, Rep. Kuster met with the North Country Veteran Council at the Berlin Vet Center to discuss the innovative community partnerships that define veterans care in the North Country. Fifteen members of the council attended along with representatives from White River Junction and New Hampshire DHHS.

On August 21, Rep. Kuster hosted a roundtable discussion with veterans in Colebrook. Rep. Kuster was joined by Director of the White River Junction VA Medical Center, Deborah Amdur, Acting Chief of Staff and Head of Ambulatory Services, Dr. Hugh Huizenga and veterans from World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. The discussion centered around the proposed part time access clinic the VA is hoping to add to Colebrook and the general needs of the North Country Veterans Community.

4. Misc. / Announcements / Calendar Items:

19 OCT, 4th Annual Seacoast Veterans Conference "Seeking Your Normal In The Face Of War", 3003 Lafayette Road, Portsmouth, NH

19 OCT 2013 Veteran Amputee Golf Tournament, Loudon Country Club

23 OCT – Veterans Count Breakfast 0730 Radisson, Manchester – FREE - call 800-778-4251. Speaker will be Col Danny McKnight, USA(ret) – Wrote Streets of Mogadishu – (basis for Black Hawk Down)

3 NOV, 10:30-noon: Fall Clean-up @ the NH State Veterans Cemetery by Rolling Thunder and others

10 NOV, Marine Corps 238th Birthday

11 NOV, 11:00am: Veterans Day ceremony @ the NH State Veterans Cemetery, hosted by DAV

12 NOV, Veterans Day ceremony at NH Veterans Home at 1100

5. Motion to adjourn 1st J Shea, 2nd B Saxon and the meeting ended at 1830.

Next meeting date: 5 NOV 2013 (Regularly the 1st Tue at 1700) Location: AASF, Concord

Respectfully submitted,

Steph Riley
Secretary