

Minutes

January 24, 2018

Executive Committee

A meeting of the Executive Committee of the South Carolina Military Base Task Force convened on January 24, 2018, at 11:00 AM at the BB&T Building in Columbia.

A notice of the meeting was posted in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

The following people were in attendance: William L. Bethea, Jr. (Chairman), Charlie Farrell (Executive Coordinator), Dan Beatty (Columbia), Steve Creech (Sumter), Col Ronnie Taylor (SCNG), Mary Graham (Charleston), Fred Monk, Scott Jaillette, Marlon James, Chris Hardy, George Ramsey, Haidee Stith, Jeff Wilkinson, and Sandy Claypoole (Program Manager).

Bill Bethea called the meeting to order.

Bill introduced Jeff Wilkinson from The State and welcomed Chris Hardy and Marlon James as guests.

The minutes from our previous meeting in October 2017 were approved.

Reports from Communities

Mary Graham, Charleston

The snow storm earlier this month had a major impact on the runways in Charleston as the airport was not prepared to deal with the snow and ice. The runways are jointly owned by the Air Force and the Airport. The Air Force deployed the C-17s elsewhere for the storm and did not have the equipment to de-ice the runways. The Airport did not have a strategy to re-open. The Air Force, Airport and Boeing were working on a strategy to prevent the same situation in the future from happening again.

Dan Beatty, Columbia

Fort Jackson is expanding the training mission, with basic training being lifted to a higher standard. There is a new physical training regimen and a new marksmanship program. The Naval and Air Force Chaplaincy schools on Fort Jackson will move out by the beginning of 2019. Kevin Shwedo is the new CASA for South Carolina. He has also assumed responsibility for the Fort Gordon, Augusta area. The economic analysis done by the Military Base Task Force encompassed the Fort Gordon area. Fort Gordon's infrastructure doesn't support the number of people there. Many of the people working at Fort Gordon are expected to live in SC, which will have a positive economic impact for SC.

Steve Creech, Sumter

Approximately 400 Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) pilots are arriving and will be up and running in February. Steve offered to bring the Executive Committee to Shaw on March 21st for our meeting.

The RPAs are flying 7000 miles away, with a two second delay between Shaw and Kandahar. The only time pilots relinquish control of the planes is during takeoff and landings.

Col Ronnie Taylor, National Guard

Attack Battalion 151 is still in Afghanistan. 742nd just came back from Romania and Poland. Next month the 2nd of the 263rd is due to transfer authority to the National Capitol Region. Also sent a battery to Germany. The soldiers are deployed for 12 months. There are about 90 people in a battery. The equipment that is used for training in SC is on a ship on its way to Germany. There are probably 40 full time Guardsmen in a 348 person battalion. At Fort Bliss, they have been practicing with drones carrying a heat seeking signature on the back. We stood up a Cyber Battalion last July and its being mobilized to go to Virginia to work with different agencies. We also have Signal companies going back to Afghanistan. Because of the budget/Continuing Resolution (CR) the guard is moving some state money for needed rebuilds. State money has to be used by June and this work has to be done before Federal money can be used. The shut down significantly impacted the Guard this weekend. There were 4200 drilling and 2000 of them had to be sent home. An infantry battalion that is training to go to the national training center came in Friday and drew all their equipment, M-1s and Bradleys, drove them out to the training area and had to come back in. The Guard is asking for a resolution for the Guard and the Reserves to be exempted from future furloughs. Soldiers that have been waiting on slots for 6 to 12 months to get MOS qualified so they can be promoted were supposed to go to training on Sunday and school was cancelled. Now they have to find another school date. That means some have to go in-country with one rank less than they could have. These people are not entitled to travel pay, which means they endured the expense of going to drill, having to go back home, and now having to take time to go to another drill. The budget is now due on February 8th and the next drill is the 10th and 11th, so there is a potential for the same thing to happen again. Haven't officially announced the ARB (Attack Reconnaissance Battalion) or ARI (Aviation Restructure Initiative). It should be announced next week in Utah. South Carolina will get their full Aviation Recon package (Apaches) back.

Review of Initial Steps of Strategic Plan

Our Strategic Plan gives us a roadmap to go forward. The objectives are:

1. Establish a new operational structure for the SC Military Base Task Force.
2. Protect and grow South Carolina's military assets.
3. Improve the quality of life for military families and retirees.
4. Support veterans and retiree services and benefits through a unified and cohesive administrative structure.

The complete Strategic Plan can be found on our website at www.scmilitarybases.com.

Veterans Policy Advisory Committee

The Task Force was given the additional responsibility of the Veterans Policy Advisory Committee (VPAC) last fall before Governor Haley was made UN Ambassador. VPAC met yesterday to review the input we have received during 2017.

Charlie Farrell reviewed the feedback on issues submitted by VPAC and the committee members to prioritize their recommendations.

In order of most important to least important, they are:

*Numbers 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, and 15 have multiple answers, which means those answers scored the same.

- 1.** Obtain an accurate count of the number of veterans in the state.
- 2.** Develop program to convince transitioning service members to remain in the state.
- 3.** Inventory state agencies that serve veterans.
- 4.** Links on Veterans Administration website to SCDMH veteran resources, including links to SCDMH's three current VA state homes.
- 5.** Construct three new VA state homes.
- 6.** Dissolve the SC Division of Veterans Affairs and create a SC Department of Veterans Affairs.
Increase communications to all veterans.
Access granted for SCDMH to VA eligibility system to determine veteran benefit status.
- 7.** Coordinate those agencies that help veterans with employment opportunities.
Investigate possible change to tax exemption for spouses if service member dies from service connected disability.
Inform veterans that if they receive a solicitation from a charity or professional fundraiser and they have concerns about that organization to notify the Secretary of State's office.
- 8.** Provide Director of Veterans Affairs increased authority over county Veterans Affairs Officers.
- 9.** Notify veterans charities of filing requirements for charitable registration and annual financial reports.
Revise the current legislation covering the appointment of the county Veterans Affairs Officer from a two-year appointment to a four-year appointment.
- 10.** Raise public awareness about veterans charities fraud.
Expand use for VA of Telehealth technology.
- 11.** Better vet VSOs to assist the Secretary of State
Strengthen state Veterans Affairs Office.
- 12.** Inventory VSOs (Veterans Service Organizations).
- 13.** Enhance technology for County Veterans Affairs Offices.
- 14.** Recruitment/outreach efforts to veterans by SCDMH to enhance and support SCDMH workforce development with possible partnership with programs such as the Transition Assistance Program (TAP).
- 15.** Create a central clearing house that advertises and coordinates all the veteran support resources in the state.
Advocate for leeway in use of vehicles for county Veterans Affairs Officers.
Increase awareness of DAODAS (Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services).
- 16.** Provide more state funds for county Veterans Affairs Offices to be used for certification and recertification training and to purchase needed equipment.

Charlie gave the ballot to the Executive Committee members and guests for them to prioritize.

Jeff Wilkinson asked about the difference between a SC Division of Veterans Affairs and a SC Department of Veterans Affairs. The Department would be a cabinet position and report to the Governor. The Division is not.

Jeff also asked if there was a problem with veterans charity frauds. Charlie explained that nationwide there are over 42,000 VSOs, and 1500 to 1800 in South Carolina. (See #10 above)

2017 Legislative Session

Bill explained that in 2016 we received a partial exemption of state tax on military retirement that is being phased in. We are working for a full exemption again this year. Committee has met with Senator Hutto and pitched this as a jobs issue as well. Senator Malloy was the primary opponent last year. We are trying to have this exemption placed on Special Order. Commerce reports that we have had 97,927 new jobs created in the last seven years. Volvo and BMW will tell you that the pool of qualified workers has been significantly depleted. We are doing things in education to build up our workforce, but that takes time. A military retiree typically has around 20 years remaining to work. These military retirees have skill sets that make them suitable for almost any of these jobs. This is a compelling issue we need to communicate. If we continue to recruit industry to our state we are going to get to the point where those industries will have trouble finding their workforce.

2018 Military Legislative Initiatives

SC Giving Back to Our Veterans Act

[S.62](#) and [H. 3104](#) To enact the SC Giving Back to Our Veterans Act relating to deductions from South Carolina taxable income of individuals so as to allow the deduction of retirement benefits attributable to service on active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States. The bills were not addressed this session and remain in the Senate Finance Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee respectively.

In-state Tuition for Veterans

[H. 3035](#) This bill makes revisions relating to in-state tuition rates at public institutions of higher education for certain persons associated with the Armed Services of the United States, so as to revise residency requirements and provide veterans who show their intent to establish domicile in this state, and their dependents may receive in-state tuition rates without having established a physical presence in this state. The bill passed the House by a 109 to 4 roll call vote and was sent to the Senate. The bill was sent to the Senate Education Committee.

County Veterans' Affairs Officers

[H. 3428](#) This bill provides that the director of the Division of Veterans' Affairs shall receive and respond to complaints from veterans regarding county Veterans' Affairs Officers. The Director of the Division of Veterans' Affairs shall forward the complaint, along with a

recommendation, to the appropriate legislative delegation for its consideration and final determination. The bill passed the House with an 87 to 21 roll call vote and was sent to the Senate on March 30. The bill was referred to the Senate General Committee.

Compliance with the SC Uniform Voters Act

[H. 3685](#) Relating to Special Elections to fill vacancies in office, so as to adjust the dates on which primaries, runoff primaries, and special elections must be held to comply with the SC Uniform Military and Overseas Voters Act. The bill passed the House 105 to 0 and was sent to the Senate on March 29. The bill was referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee.

South Carolina Service Members Civil Relief Act

[H. 3919](#) To expand and supplement the rights, benefits and protections of the Federal Service Members Civil Relief Act, 50 U.S.C. 3901, et seq. The bill was not debated in 2017 and remains in the House Committee on Judiciary.

Homeowners' Association Regime Fees Fairness to Deployed Service Members

[H. 3010](#) This bill enacts the "Homeowners' Association Regime Fee Fairness to Deployed Service Members Act" so as to require a service member who belongs to a homeowners' association to notify the association of orders for deployment, and to prohibit a homeowners' association from enforcing a lien or imposing a penalty for regime fees not paid during the time period that the homeowner is deployed or mobilized outside of this state. These protections are applied to dependents residing with the service member. The legislation provides that the protections to deployed homeowners may not be waived by contract and only apply to the service member's primary residence. The legislation provides that these provisions shall not be construed to waive an obligation of the deployed service member from continuing to maintain the property. The bill was not debated in 2017 and remains in the House Labor, Commerce, and Industry Committee.

Deferred Payment of Property Taxes for Deployed Military

[H. 3106](#) This bill revises a county's authority to extend the payment of property taxes for military service members in or near a hazardous duty zone, so as to: require each county to allow for a deferment; provided that the deferment begins on the tax due date and ends ninety days after the last date of deployment; and, to provide that no interest may be charged during the deployment unless the tax is not paid within the ninety-day grace period. The bill was not debated in 2017 and remains in the House Ways and Means Committee.

Drone Restrictions Near Military Bases

[S. 109](#) To provide that it is unlawful use of the property of others to operate an unmanned aerial vehicle within 500 feet horizontally or 400 feet vertically of a state or federal military installation and to provide penalties for the violation. The bill passed the Senate with a 38 to 0 roll call vote and was sent to the House. The bill was referred to the House Judiciary Committee.

Tuition Rates for Veterans

[S. 531](#) Relating to the definition of "covered individual" for the purposes of in-state tuition and fees for children and spouses of veterans and active duty military personnel, to provide that the definition includes a child or spouse enrolling within three years of a veteran's

discharge. The bill passed the Senate with a 37 to 0 roll call vote, and was referred to the House Education and Public Works Committee.

Military Child Education Coalition program focused on the needs of military children's unique transition and other needs.

The Task Force is supporting approval of a budget proviso of \$350,000 to continue and slightly expand this program to support military and veteran connected children in South Carolina. The program focuses on the four high military density areas of the state: Beaufort, Charleston, Columbia, and Sumter, as well as areas of the state where there are large numbers of Reserve and National Guard children. The 2017 program was approved for \$300,000. The additional \$50,000 requested in 2018 is to allow the program to be extended to the Aiken and Edgefield counties where an influx of military children is expected due to the new Cyber Command Complex at Fort Gordon.

Physical Therapy Licensure Compact

[H. 4799](#) Provides for the spouse of a service member to receive expedited licensure consideration.

Steve Creech asked what we had done about child care centers near military installations that met SC requirements but did not meet DoD requirements. There is an insufficient number of facilities on the bases. Military families can get reimbursement if the facility they use off base is DoD certified, but many of them are not. Bill agreed to pull together a list of requirements for those child care centers to become DoD certified.

Haidee Stith showed the Task Force website, as well as the Twitter and Facebook pages.

Jeff Wilkinson explained that when The State reporters write stories they are dependent on page views from social media.

Bill was notified by General Johnson of Fort Jackson about an Education Summit being planned for March 9th. The Task Force will participate in this Summit and help bring in key players.

Bill asked that the meeting go into Executive Session to deal with a contract matter.

Steve Creech made the motion that a \$35,000 grant be given to each of the four communities. The motion was passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandy Claypoole

