



## UNITED VETERANS COMMITTEE MINUTES

**12 December, 2017  
GENERAL MEETING  
09:00**

**UNITEDVETERANSCOMMITTEE.COM**

Meetings at VFW Post 9644  
2680 W Hampden Ave  
Englewood, CO 80110-1906  
303-789-9733



1. Call to order – United Veterans Committee – President — Jim Craig
2. Invocation and Moment of Silence for Pow's and Mia's — 1<sup>st</sup> VP, Dennis Orr
3. Pledge of Allegiance – 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President — Leanne Wheeler
4. Welcome – five first-time attendees and visitors
5. Guest Speaker — Karen Hone — Spoke about Member Clicks, a database that UVC is considering. This will enable databases to be merged, which will make contacting members, officers and past officers much easier. This database will be more inclusive than databases UVC currently maintains.

Bernie Rogoff — The auditorium at the new VA hospital has been named after UVC. The plaque that hangs in the auditorium honors all branches of the military. At the ceremony, Secretary Bowman spoke and let everyone know that Washington will sustain what UVC does. He will be the guest speaker at the UVC banquet in April, 2018.

6. Roll Call and report— Membership Chair Gary Force
7. Secretary Report — Lori Derby — Minutes from the November meeting were posted on the UVC website, and they were accepted.
8. Treasurer Report — Bernie Rogoff — After all expenses the UVC budget balance is \$14,150.00. UVC received \$1,000.00 from Gary Force's organization.

### **UVC COMMITTEE REPORTS**

9. State Legislative Committee — Dick Young — State goals were presented — not opposed — adopted. Dick asked that vets who sit in the legislature gallery and, for everyone in attendance to stay during the entire legislature. The next meeting will be January 26, 2018 at 7:30a.m..

Bill Edwards — Thornton Tomasetti — has volunteered to join Dick Young vice chair for the Legislative Committee.

Steve Rylant — A letter was written to Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer, urging them to take whatever actions are necessary to swiftly bring to the floor and pass S.2193, the *Caring for Our Veterans Act of 2017*, bipartisan

legislation approved by the Committee of Veterans' Affairs, to improve and modernize the care America provides her veterans. A motion was made and seconded. The Bill was adopted by UVC.

This legislation would build on current community care programs by putting an end to arbitrary standards for when veterans may receive community care and consolidate the disparate community care programs into one program.

The legislation would empower veterans and their health care providers to work together to determine when and where veterans should receive care based on access and quality measure. Veterans would also be given the opportunity to access walk-in clinics throughout the country to fill the gap between costly emergency room care and waiting for ambulatory care.

This legislation includes important provisions to strengthen the VA health care system and expand its ability to provide direct care to our nation's veterans, while preserving VA foundational services not accommodated in the private sector.

Ralph Bozella — Noted that 24 VSO's support the Bill. If you are a member of UVC, you support the Bill. HR4457 — Lamborn has a bill out to prioritize VA. Urged members to write to their congressman.

10. UVC Banquet — Karen Hone — Theme for the banquet. 2018 is the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Vietnam War and the Vietnam veterans in the state of Colorado will be the theme for the banquet.

Leanne Wheeler — Reached out to all member organizations to sponsor a table or buy tickets in memory of a Vietnam vet. Silver level sponsors were requested.

Member organizations can partner with other organizations to sponsor a table at the silver (or above) level.

11. Membership report — Gary Force — Post 206 was sworn in as a new UVC member and, this post is the ONLY all female post in Colorado.
12. Area reps — Shelly, Phil, Lou, Tim — No reps were present.
13. Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs — Robbie Robinson — Not present.
14. Dept of Military and Veterans Affairs — Ben Mestas — Not present.

## **VSOs, ASSOCIATES AND AFFILIATES**

15. Geneva Moore — COO, Project Sanctuary — Third annual O.P.S. gala will be Friday, May 18, 2018 at CU South Denver (formerly known as The Wildlife Experience.)

Richard Hogue — DAV —Coordinator of the Vietnam War 50<sup>th</sup> Commemoration.

Chip Deyerle — Air Force Association Mile High, VP Communications — He is on the Veterans Advisory Council for Adams County.

## **16. GOVERNOR AND CONGRESSIONAL STAFFERS**

a. Sen. Michael Bennet — Constituent Advocate, John Griego

i. John has replaced Alisha Andrews and will be Michael Bennet's Constituent Advocate going forward. He is based out of the Pikes Peak Regional Office where he will be serving, statewide, veterans, their families and active duty as well as the National Guard.

b. Rep. Ed Perlmutter — Constituent Services Representative, Kathryn Werkus

i. Perlmutter fully supports the VA and is not in favor of privatization. He wants continued accountability of the VA moving forward to the new NAMC completion and opening to serve the veterans in the state and region.

ii. The Congressman is closely watching the Choice Program to ensure accountability and how to make it work best for veterans without jeopardizing the VA.

c. Sen. Cory Gardner — Staff Assistant, Jim Cullen

i. Veterans Improved Access and Care Act, expands Choice Act, improves hiring at VA centers and requires a report of major disciplinary of medical providers to national database.

ii. Gardner has written a letter to Secretary Shulkin concerning VA wait times and unofficial waitlist.

d. Rep. Diana DeGette — Congressional Aide, Kaila Hood

i. Kaila was very glad to attend the UVC meeting as it gave her a fantastic opportunity to understand our veterans' priorities.

17. State Veterans CLC Administration — Aaron Termain — No update on Fitzsimmons UCLC expansion. VA has pushed their Telehealth package to two of their rural homes. This will expand the access to VA health providers and drastically reduce the transportation requirements.

18. State Veterans CLC Commission — Chair, Veterans Commission CLC, Karen

Kowalski. Election of officers for Commission was held. Chair, Vice Chair and

Secretary positions were filled. The annual Report was reviewed. Great attention

is being paid to quality in homes and a meeting schedule is being developed for visits in 2018.

20. VISN 19, VA Regional Office, VA Cemetery, ECHCH — VISN.

VA Regional Office, Rebecca Sawyer Smith — VA Schulkin announced November as Veterans Month. On November 3, the VARO held a Dever Homeless Veterans Stand Down, with 350 attending. The attendee number was lower than some previous years but it was, most likely, because the VA has been successful in providing HUD/VASH vouchers to homeless veterans. Their challenges continue to be funding and storage but, they are looking into various solutions.

The VARO has placed a fulltime outreach specialist at the Grand Junction Healthcare System. Fulltime VBA counselors are at the Grand Junction, Sheridan and Cheyenne, Wyoming medical centers. Veterans can now get Veteran ID cards by going to [www.vets.gov](http://www.vets.gov).

VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System — Sallie Houser-Hanfelder, Director — ECHCS concurred with the four findings presented by the OIG. They do not agree with the characterization that unofficial wait lists were secret wait lists.

VA ECHCS, at no point in time, had unauthorized "Secret wait lists." This finding was incorrect and a disservice to the employees of ECHCS.

In January 2015, ECHCS used interest trackers to gauge potential demand for a variety of mental health groups among veterans who were already receiving therapy from a VA medical provider. Since then, it has become clear that the practice of interest trackers is not permitted by VA scheduling policy. Within 60 days of receiving the new scheduling guidance, ECHCS leadership retained all mental health staff and schedulers and discontinued use of the interest trackers.

Steve Best — Executive Director, NCA Continental District, Dept of Veterans Affairs — Contract was awarded in September 2017 to build Pikes Peak National Cemetery, Colorado Springs. Construction to begin soon. Early turnover Fall 2018, when internments will begin. Completion of cemetery in Fall 2019.

Joe Turnbach — Director, Ft. Logan National Cemetery — In November there were 345 internments — 138 caskets, 207 cremations. December 16<sup>th</sup> is Wreaths Across America. Last year 4,000 were placed; this year 15,000 will be placed. The ceremony is at 10:00a.m., Shelter A.

This was Joe's last meeting as Director of Ft. Logan. He thanked UVC for their continued support of our mission. He also thanked UVC for its efforts and help in purchasing land from the state to extend the life of Ft. Logan.

21. Old Business — No old Business.
22. New Business — No new business.
23. UVC President's Comments and Announcements — Review legislative and federal goals and don't forget the Banquet.
24. Benediction — UVC 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President — Leanne Wheeler
25. Adjourn — Next general meeting date — January 9, 2018