



FORT KNOX RETIREE COUNCIL

15 January 2021

The Fort Knox Retiree Council was called to order at 0900 hours, Friday, 15 January 2021 in the DHR, Graham Hall, conference room by BG (Ret) Charles D. Estes, Chair, who presided.

The attendance for the Retiree Council meeting was as follows:

Voting members present or via telephone:

Charles D. Estes, BG (Ret), USA, Chair
Rodney J. Newell, CSM (Ret), USA, Vice-Chair (via TC)
Belinda Gaither-Schmitt, SFC (Ret), USA, Secretary
Jackie A. Ash, CSM (Ret), USA (via TC)
Franklin T. Brady, CSM (Ret), USA (via TC)
Douglas E. Frecker, CW3 (Ret), USA (via TC)
Kevin F. Gregory, COL (Ret), USA (via TC)
Thomas A. Goff, CW5 (Ret), USA (via TC)
Donavan J. Mahuron, MSG (Ret), USA (via TC)
Michael P. Peck, COL (Ret), USA (via TC)
Michael Pesko, Jr., MAJ (Ret), USA (via TC)

Non-voting members present via telephone:

William Lamont, LTC (Ret), USA
Glenda Nicol, MSG (Ret), USA
Sherman Nicol, SGM (Ret), USA
Georgie Sharp, CPL (Ret), USMC
David Shearer, CW4 (Ret), USA
Richard C. Ward, MAJ (Ret), USA

Voting members absent:

Randy J. Gasser, CPO (Ret), USN
Irvin Lyons, Jr., SGM (Ret), USA

Non-voting members absent:

Thomas C. Cunningham, LTC (Ret) USA

Darren W. Hargrove, SGM (Ret), USA
Harold Denson, 1SG (Ret), USA
Mrs. Cathy Williamson, Volunteer

Non-voting council advisory members present:

Mrs. Jolene Culpepper, Civ, RSO/Chief/TC
Mr. Kevin Corbin, Civ, DHR/AG

The Chair led the attendees into The Pledge of Allegiance and began the meeting with a roll call of Retiree Council members attending via phone.

Opening comments:

BG (Ret) Estes welcomed everyone to the Retiree Council meeting.

Old Business:

No old business was discussed at the time.

State reports:

Ohio:

CW3 (Ret) Frecker stated that the Ohio Legislature is not doing much at this time. He also mentioned that LensCrafters offers great discounts for retired military.

LTC (Ret) Cunningham still has physical support equipment available for veterans.

West Virginia:

CW5 (Ret) Goff informed the Chair that the final draft of the charter was staffed, briefed, and signed by the Adjutant General, WVNG. The council is now serving the TAG, WV while also providing representation to the Fort Knox Retire Council. Currently, CW5 (Ret) Goff is serving on both councils. The WV council meets monthly and has switched from Zoom to Microsoft Teams, to accommodate the G1 WVARNG and his staff, allowing them participating in meetings and sharing content. Our affiliation works through the G1 and RSO team. The charter is on file at HQDA Director of Retired Services.

The WV council sent a nomination to Mr. Mark Overberg (Army G1 RSO) for consideration for the CSA council, along with an issue recommendation. We will be meeting with the WVARNG RSO staff later this month to begin scheduling and planning the WV RAD sometime in the 4th quarter of 2021.

BG (Ret) Estes complemented CW5 (Ret) Goff on a good job completing the WV charter, but told him that any nomination packet or issue should have been staffed through the Fort Knox Retiree Council prior to sending them directly to the Army G1 RSO office. BG (Ret) Estes also requested that the submitted information is forwarded to Mrs. Culpepper.

Indiana:

MSG (Ret) Mahuron reported that the IN Legislature just went into session and will get their new Military Bills later.

The IN National Guard is supporting COVID relief efforts in Indiana. There is also a group of Veterans in IN called the Gunfighters. They meet each Friday evening at 6:00 PM on the public square and a roll call is held for all deceased Veterans who have passed in the previous week. They try to get as many reports as possible on deceased Veterans from all over the state and nationwide. When each name is read a bell

is tolled. At the finish, Taps is played by a person rather than a recording. This group is in Martinsville, IN and they have been doing this for the last 456 days.

The IN Government has opened a new office for Veterans Affairs in the American Legion National Headquarters building. They will be bringing new services to the retirees and Veterans.

IN vets is a new non-profit organization founded by Veterans and approved by the state of IN, helping Veterans transition to civilian life. It helps former service members' transition to civilian life by connecting them with IN employers and providing career-building resources.

The Honor Our Veterans program was created under IN initiative. Honor Our Veterans is sponsored by the IN Housing and Development Authority in partnership with IN vets. Honor Our Veterans is specifically designed to help IN employers recruit qualified veterans to fill positions, by providing relocation assistance to those qualified military Veterans through eligible employers.

The Facebook membership of the IN Retiree Group is increasing.

Illinois:

COL (Ret) Peck reported that the IL General Assembly ended its 101st session with no action being taken on Veterans issues. However, the 31 deaths at our LaSalle Veterans Home caused a hearing by both the Illinois Senate and House Veterans Affairs committee. Inspections were conducted by the VA Region 12 infectious disease team and the Illinois Department of Public Health. As a result of their inspection and recommendations the Director of Veterans Affairs has asked for an independent investigation by the Illinois Inspector General. The director has appointed an interim administrator and terminated the current administrator and suspended the head nurse of the facility in LaSalle.

He also mentioned that Illinois has five veteran's homes, which includes a new one that was just opened in November in Chicago. Each home is structured differently. This has caused a lack of uniformity in the response to the Coronavirus.

The Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs Advisory Council, which is composed of all the major veterans organizations has issued a letter of confidence to the director and will use the Inspector General's report when the council issues the annual report in July.

Kentucky:

CPL (Ret) Sharp stated that the Marine League is conducting a great deal of Honor Guard details for funerals in the area. Her concern is that while they are authorized to serve as a funeral detail for all services, the Marine Corps requires only a Marine Corps detail can service at a Marine Corps veterans funeral. She continued by stating that the Honor Flight is scheduling a flight for female veterans in 2021. She will provide the detail to Mrs. Culpepper for distribution to the Retiree Council.

MAJ (Ret) Pesko asked if there are any scheduled dates for the Commissary/PX Advisory meeting. He was advised that currently the schedule coincides with the dates of the Retiree Council meetings, but today's meeting was cancelled because of the training holiday.

BG (Ret) Estes mentioned that the Kentucky Legislature is back in session, but currently there are no military related issues pending.

Open discussion:

CSM (Ret) Newell pointed out that not only the National Guard Units are doing COVID support for their states, but the Reserve Units are also supporting the COVID fight.

BG (Ret) Estes asked the members if there are any objections to moving the RAD from April 2021 to October 2021. Since there were no objections BG (Ret) Estes ordered the RAD date to be changed to 15 October 2021.

Chief of Staff Issues:

BG (Ret) Estes requested that members of the Retiree Council consider possible concern(s) for input to the CSA later this year.

RSO comments:

Mrs. Culpepper asked that each States' Retiree Council Representative provides her and SFC (Ret) Gaither-Schmitt (secretary) with their notes prior to the scheduled meeting.

She informed the Retiree Council about Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP)/Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) offset. Many spouses are confused about the letters they receive from DFAS about the phase-out of SPB/DIC and she told the Retiree Council to have any concerned spouse contact her for clarification.

She also mentioned the importance of having a DFAS MyPay account.

In addition, she pointed out that the Army Echoes newsletter includes valuable information for retirees and annuitants.

DHR comments:

Mr. Corbin discussed the availability of Microsoft Teams and that the Retiree Council could use this communication option for our meetings. Google.me is also available, but the requested Zoom option is not authorized. Mr. Corbin requested feedback on which option would be most convenient for our meetings.

The Soldier For Life program was changed to Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to reflect that this program is available for all services.

BG (Ret) Estes adjourned the meeting at 0940 hours, Friday, 15 January 2021.

/s/ Belinda Gaither-Schmitt
BELINDA GAITHER-SCHMITT
SFC (RET), USA
Secretary, Retiree Council

/s/ Charles D. Estes
CHARLES D. ESTES
BG (Ret), USA
Chair, Retiree Council

INSTALLATION/GARRISON/ASCC Council: West Virginia Army National Guard

SUBJECT: Enhanced recognition of Army Spouses at retirement

DISCUSSION: The West Virginia Retired Military Council recommends the development and authorization of a lapel pin similar to the Soldier for Life pin specifically for Spouses of retiring Soldiers. In that their contributions to the success of the Soldier and the installation are currently noted through certificates and coins, there is nothing that they can display to be recognized in public. Retired Soldiers wear their Soldier For Life lapel pin, and often one of their lapel pins from their highest award. The spouse contributes not only to the career of the Soldier but in support of the installation, local units and the community of families on those installations. This is a force multiplier that is critical in not only securing Army capabilities, but in adding to the traditions of the service. In that it is an honor to serve and retire in the Army that service applies to the spouse as well as the Soldier and merits something similar to the Soldier For Life pin but specific to the spouse.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Chief of Staff of the Army Retired Soldier Council support the implementation and design of a lapel pin for retired Soldier Spouses. The pin may also indicate by design a prescribed number of years as a serving spouse such as bronze, Silver, Gold. This could be awarded to the spouse as the years are accumulated with a final award upon retirement.

APPROVED BY INSTALLATION/GARRISON/ASCC RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON(S):
CW5 (Ret) Thomas A. Goff, Chairman, The West Virginia Retired Military Council
LTC (Ret) Jerry L. Wood, Vice-Chairman, The West Virginia Retired Military Council

TAG COMMENTS:

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: