



## FORT KNOX RETIREE COUNCIL

15 April 2022

The Fort Knox Retiree Council was called to order at 0900 hours, Friday, 15 April 2022 in the DHR 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  
Franklin T. Brady, CSM (Ret), USA (via TC)  
Betsy Brocklehurst, MSgt (Ret) USAF (via TC)  
Douglas E. Frecker, CW3 (Ret), USA (via TC)  
Kevin F. Gregory, COL (Ret), USA (via TC)  
Darren W. Hargrove, SGM (Ret), USA  
Donavan J. Mahuron, MSG (Ret), USA  
Michael Pesko, Jr., MAJ (Ret), USA

Non-voting members present:

Jolene Culpepper, 1SG (Ret) USA  
Thomas C. Cunningham, LTC (Ret) USA  
Harold Denson, 1SG (Ret), USA (via TC)  
Irvin Lyons, Jr., SGM (Ret), USA  
Georgie Sharp, CPL (Ret), USMC (via TC)  
David Shearer, CW4 (Ret), USA

Voting members absent:

Eliseo T. Lopez, CW2 (Ret), USA

Non-voting members absent:

Thomas A. Goff, CW5 (Ret), USA  
William Lamont, LTC (Ret), USA  
Glenda Nicol, MSG (Ret), USA

Sherman Nicol, SGM (Ret), USA  
Richard C. Ward, MAJ (Ret), USA  
Mrs. Cathy Williamson, Volunteer

Garrison Command Team:

Mr. Jim Bradford, Deputy Garrison Commander

Non-voting council advisory members present:

Mr. Kevin Corbin, DHR AG  
Mrs. Christy Zeitz, RSO

BG (Ret) Estes welcomed everyone to the Retiree Council meeting and began the meeting with a roll call of Retiree Council members attending via phone. He then led the attendees into The Pledge of Allegiance.

**State reports:**

Ohio:

Ohio Department of Veterans Services, sponsors the Ohio Women Veterans conference 6 August 2022.

On 3 March 2022 the ODVS workforce team went to Ft. Campbell to promote Ohio as the best State for military members and their families to live, work, and raise a family.

ODVS & ODHE Created the "Purple Star" for K-12 programs in schools that work with Military Families.

ID cards are available at DSCC Columbus, call ahead or register online for faster service.

The VA wants to close the Hospital in Chillicothe and build a new eighty bed facility in Circleville and one in Dayton (Near Wright-Patterson AFB)

On 4 April 2022, the Ohio council convened at 2pm in the Ohio National Guard State Headquarters. The Ohio Department of Veterans Services Director Deborah Ashenurst, along with several members of unit retirees associations were in attendance. Discussion on how we as a group can best serve all veterans as well as all Military Retirees.

LTC (Ret) Cunningham reported that has physical support equipment of all kinds and that the equipment is in high demand. He brought 40 Powerchairs to the Red Cross in Fort Knox and there are only 2 left. In addition, \$450,000 worth of equipment was distributed to needing veterans in the last year. The program is growing and is really improving veterans' lives. Still the biggest issue is storage of the equipment.

West Virginia:

West Virginia held their first Retiree Appreciation Day on 2 April 2022. The Day was a success with 46 vendors supporting the event. 85 Retirees, 41 Family members, 1 Gold Star Family, and 3 Veterans attended the event.

Indiana:

The Indiana legislature did very little this session. HB 1077 to authorize memorial to honor those fighting terrorism passed the committee unanimously but failed the House. Two additional bills for Vets did not get out of committee. The group called for the vets committee chairman to resign because of lack of activity, but he declined.

The new Veteran's Center in downtown Indianapolis was opened on 1 March 2022. This center will be serving Indiana veterans of all services.

A new VA Clinic was recently opened on Grissom Air Reserve Base. This was badly needed for this area.

A private Veterans group formed in Howard and 4 surrounding counties to raise funds to support Veteran's needs.

The ESGR Indiana is holding a boss lift for Employers in August. This will be a two-day event and will be a refueling operation somewhere over the Midwest.

#### Illinois:

On 9 April 2022 the Illinois General Assembly Senate Bill 1975 which included the provisions giving surviving spouses with DIC the disabled veterans homestead exemption. They also approved a provision to eliminate the annual verification disabled veterans homestead exemption. These are two great victories and they were literally at the last minute. These bills will provide great comfort and aid to veterans and their families. The bill is being sent to the governor for signature. In the bill, there was also a statement requesting a review by the Department of Revenue on the Veterans Homestead exemption.

The VA, National Cemetery Administration, and Lake County Forest Preserve District will hold an Open House to provide information regarding the VA request for the transfer of approximately 4.7 acres of District property to allow the VA to expand the Fort Sheridan National Cemetery. The Open House is 26 April 2022 from 5 to 7 PM at the Midwest Young Artists Conservatory, in Highwood, IL.

Illinois passed the naming of the Medal of Honor Highway.

With 2 days left on the legislative calendar and with over 200 witness slips to support House Bill 4268, an amendment to the Veterans Lottery Program which provides access for "Not for Profits" to request grant funding to provide veterans with mental health SERVICES. The amendment changed the state statute from PTSD to Mental Health Behavioral Services. This broader scope would allow the not for profits to provide mental health first aid training, comfort dogs and services to the spouses of veterans who suffer secondary PTSD. The bill has been in the Senate state government committee for over two months and with eight days remaining we were able to pull it out of the committee and onto the floor for a vote.

On the federal side, assistance is still needed to continue to support the PACT Act, which passed the house and is now in the Senate. We have been assured support from both Senator Durbin and Senator Duckworth.

#### Kentucky:

The 2022 session of the Kentucky General Assembly is close to wrapping up.

House Bill 96, is a major priority of the Kentucky Commission on Military Affairs, seeking to exclude all distributions from military pension plans received by retired members of the United States military and their surviving spouses or former spouse under a survivor benefit plan from income taxation for taxable years beginning on or after January 1, 2022, and before January 1, 2026; require reporting by the Department of Revenue. The bill will not pass.

House Bill 74 exempts motor vehicles purchased by members of the Armed Forces on duty in Kentucky and motor vehicles titled and registered in Kentucky by members of the Armed Forces on duty in Kentucky from motor vehicle usage tax.

The Red Cross "Dress for Success" Program is extending the program out to Retirees.

SGM (Ret) Lyons extended his appreciation to LTC (Ret) Cunningham for the great program he is leading of providing veterans with the needed equipment.

#### Open discussion:

BG (Ret) Estes asked below listed Retiree Council Members to let him know at the next meeting in July if they want to renew their appointment:

BG (Ret) Estes  
CSM (Ret) Newell  
CSM (Ret) Brady  
CSM (Ret) Ash  
MSG (Ret) Mahuron  
MAJ (Ret) Pesko  
SGM (Ret) Hargrove  
CW3 (Ret) Frecker  
COL (Ret) Gregory

SGM (Ret) Lyons informed the Retiree Council members that the VA Clinic in Fort Knox now has an Optometry and Audiology Clinic. UPDATE: MAJ (Ret) Pesko visited the VA Clinic in Fort Knox after the Retiree Council meeting. They have the Optometry service available, but it is done by a contractor. The current contractor has relocated to the Zorn Ave VA clinic. They will contact MAJ (Ret) Pesko when a replacement is available at the Ft Knox VA Clinic.

MSG (Ret) Mahuron mentioned that his Facebook membership is increasing, but he requires some help with updating his page.

**Garrison Command Comments:**

BG (Ret) Estes asked the Command Team about conducting the RAD in October as scheduled and Mr. Bradford told the Retiree Council that there is currently nothing that would restrict holding a RAD at the Saber and Quill. In addition, funding is most likely available to pay for the hotel rooms for eligible Retiree Council members.

Mr. Corbin confirmed that rooms have been blocked off for the upcoming Retiree Council meetings and that members should reserve their rooms as soon as possible.

The Commissary Council meeting was cancelled, but the Chairperson provided the information, that the Commissary is looking at opening on Mondays in the future. Early Bird shopping will remain available. Retiree Council members asked if it was possible to be on the Commissary information distribution list to receive updated information.

BG (Ret) Estes adjourned the meeting at 0950 hours, on Friday 15 April 2022.

/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