



## FORT KNOX RETIREE COUNCIL

**22 January 2022**

The Fort Knox Retiree Council was called to order at 0900 hours, Friday, 22 January 2022 in the Director, Human Resources Conference Room by BG (Ret) Charles D. Estes, Chair, who presided.

The attendance for the Retiree Council meeting was as follows:

Voting members present:

Charles D. Estes, BG (Ret), USA, Chair  
Rodney J. Newell, CSM (Ret), USA, Vice-Chair  
Jolene Culpeper, 1SG (Ret), USA, Acting Secretary  
Jackie A. Ash, CSM (Ret), USA  
Franklin T. Brady, CSM (Ret), USA  
Douglas E. Frecker, CW3 (Ret), USA  
Kevin F. Gregory, COL (Ret), USA  
Eliseo T. Lopez, CW2 (Ret), USA  
Donavan J. Mahuron, MSG (Ret), USA  
Michael Pesko, Jr., MAJ (Ret), USA

Non-voting members present:

Thomas C. Cunningham, LTC (Ret) USA  
David Shearer, CW4 (Ret), USA  
Georgie Sharp, CPL (Ret), USMC  
Darren W. Hargrove, SGM (Ret), USA  
Mrs. Cathy Williamson, Volunteer  
Irvin Lyons, Jr., SGM (Ret), USA  
Betsy Brocklehurst, MSgt (Ret) USAF

Voting members absent:

Belinda Gaither-Schmitt, SFC (Ret), USA, Secretary

Non-voting members absent:

Harold Denson, 1SG (Ret), USA  
Thomas A. Goff, CW5 (Ret), USA

William Lamont, LTC (Ret), USA  
Michael P. Peck, COL (Ret), USA  
Glenda Nicol, MSG (Ret), USA  
Sherman Nicol, SGM (Ret), USA  
Richard C. Ward, MAJ (Ret), USA

Garrison Command Team:

Kevin Corbin, DHR/AG  
CSM Fogle, GCSM

Non-voting council advisory members present:

Mrs. Christy Zeitz

BG (Ret) Estes welcomed everyone to the Retiree Council meeting and led the attendees into The Pledge of Allegiance.

**Opening comments:**

BG (Ret) Estes welcomed the Garrison Command Team and the Retiree Council members.

**State reports:**

**Ohio:** CW4 Frecker:

Reported an update on SGM Nichol's health condition.

Ohio House Armed Services & Veteran Affairs committee, are hearing testimony for a declaration for the Ohio National Guard, for support of COVID and the Food Banks.

They continue to improve the comprehensive website for the Ohio Department of Veterans Services. OhioVets.gov is now aligned with the Innovate Ohio Platform (IOP), the site is now better connected with other state agency websites.

The Ohio Department of Veterans Service continue to work with Legislature to improve care for those that suffer from Agent Orange issues and a clarification of Agent Orange definition.

The Ohio Army and Air National Guard as well as the State Defense Force continue to assist the state with testing and administering the COVID Vaccine. Over 2500 National Guard Soldiers (113 Doctors) are supporting Hospital staff in their daily missions.

On January 10<sup>th</sup>, Ohio Council members met with the Ohio National Guard Chief of Staff and several of the staff of The Adjutant General office and the Public Affairs office.

The Ohio National Guard Chief of Staff Office offered to assist with conference rooms, conference call capability and funds for a Retiree Appreciation Day event.

CW4 Frecker discussed the USAR Retirement Services Program.

CW4 Frecker is currently working on a Homestead exception for retirees and Veterans.

LTC Cunningham provided information on the physical support equipment for veterans. He provided 6 chairlifts to veterans. He has high quality power chairs to offer. He also provided the Facebook report and requested feedback on the flyer. A hunting event will take place in the near future, more to follow. The December hunting event provided 19 veterans the opportunity to participate.

Home Depot is offering Veterans discounts.

CSM Newell recommended changing the colors (red, white and blue) on the Retirement Shoulder Patch as a recommendation as a CofS Council issue.

**West Virginia:** COL Gregory

In progress reviews (IPRs) are being conducted for the WV RAD that is scheduled for 2 April 2022 with a case lot sale.

COVID rate is high, 25% positive.

130 Nation Guardsmen are supporting the hospitals.

Legislation is not in session.

**Indiana:** MSG Mahuron

117 National Guardsmen are supporting the hospitals and nursing homes.

The Indianapolis VA clinic is taking walk-ins.

A tax exemption bill was introduced.

CSM Ash informed the council that an obituary site is being constructed on the state Facebook page.

One of the state senator's office is now in direct contact with him.

CW4 Shearer informed the council that a job fair is being discussed with council involvement.

**Illinois:** CW2 Eliseo (Lee) T. Lopez/CSM Brady,

Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery: This issue has not been resolved as of this date. The last action taken was by the Joliet City Council in which they tried to annex the land adjacent to the cemetery. This action would develop two (2) more truck terminals and add 2000 additional trucks to Highway 53, which borders the cemetery and there are currently 5000 trucks daily using this highway, which is adjacent to the largest intermodal train yard in the nation. The major problem/issue is the truck congestion upsets the graveyard ceremonies and causes trucks to get lost and drive over graves within the cemetery. Congressional action has been requested, but there has been no action taken yet.

Medal of Honor Highway: US Highway 20, which runs from Oregon to Massachusetts has been renamed Medal of Honor Highway. Of the 12 states, only New York and Illinois, have not approved this yet. In the state of Illinois, the bill has been approved in the Senate and still sits in the House.

Illinois House Bill 2378: Is still moving forward. This bill is the amendment to the homestead exemption which includes surviving spouses with DIC.

Illinois Veterans Advisory Council: It is still working with the Defense State Liaison Office in pushing through the Illinois General Assembly a bill to provide for dependents of active-duty military, so they can keep them in one school district and there's also a bill to provide free certification for dependents.

Illinois State Legislation: Governor also signed into law that effective any Illinois State Offices, major and local major companies displaying the American Flag, will purchase and display only flags made in the United States.

CSM Brady informed the council that the National Guardsmen are supporting the local hospitals.

The military closet coat drive went well.

**Kentucky:** SGM Lyons/SGM Hargrove

Representatives of JECVO's 25 veteran service organizations (VSOs) approved the following three legislative priorities for this session:

1. Support a viable two-year budget for the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs. It is critical that adequate and sustainable funding be provided for five veteran nursing homes, five veteran cemeteries, burial honors program, benefit counseling, in addition to other vital programs administered by the agency.
  - a. The department, whose sole focus is the welfare of veterans and their families, has been highly successful to this point in accomplishing its mission. They must have a solid long-term budget that ensures that progress made to date does not backslide. Even better, it must allow the department the funding necessary to improve and advance its operation.
  - b. Legislators approved this tax exemption in the last session but its authorization is good for only one year. Having VSO posts or chapters in proximity to veterans and their families is critical to ensuring that benefits **earned** by the veteran can be obtained. They also provide a conduit for veterans seeking counseling or assistance through the federal VA medical system. There is minor financial impact on the state budget and local city and county governments have stated their support of this exemption.

HB 96 has been filed by Rep. Walker Thomas for this priority. Military retirees who served their state and nation in uniform for at least twenty years, making many sacrifices, deserve this benefit! JECVO urges you to contact your local Representative asking that they sign on as a co-sponsor of this important legislation.
2. Ensure the reauthorization of the law passed in the 2021 General Assembly session providing tax exemption to qualified Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) who own their own property when their annual charitable contributions qualify them as "purely public charities"
3. Support a major priority of the Kentucky Commission on Military Affairs (KCMA) seeking to exempt U.S. military retirees' pension income from taxation. JECVO is also strongly supporting the passage of a Joint Resolution to Kentucky's U.S. Congressional delegation requesting their support in encouraging the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to add both the Lexington and Louisville VA Medical Centers to a current VA pilot program authorizing hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT) treatment for veterans suffering from traumatic brain injuries (TBI) or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These are the signature injuries incurred by veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. A bill is expected to be filed soon.

Lawmakers have until February 28 to introduce legislation in the House and until March 2 to introduce legislation in the Senate. In addition to the budget bills (House Bill 1 & 285), the following have been introduced thus far relating to veterans:

Senate Joint Resolution 32

Barlow, SP5 Edward A., highway designation, Boone County, KY Route 8.

House Bill 125

Exclusion of certain pension income from taxation.

House Bill 96

Military pensions, income tax deduction.

House Bill 26  
Veteran, definition of, discharged LGBTQ veterans, inclusion.

House Bill 229  
Veterans' organizations, sales and use tax exemption.

House Bill 22  
Women Veterans' Appreciation Day, June 12, designation.

SGM Hargrove provided information on taxable income (IRS 525 code) Ms. Zeitz provided specific information/clarification on the tax exception.

SGM Lyons provided information on the resurrected of the Greenwood cemetery. Many Veterans are buried here. The local government and students assisted with the cleanup. The media was also involved.

SGM Lyons recommends the Facebook flyer format/verbiage be changed and to provide the document in PDF so changes can be made.

SGM Lyons made a recommendation to the new VA hospital to designate a floor for women.

Kentucky members are planning to create a state retiree council similar to Ohio and West Virginia.

Colonel Young was posthumously promoted to Brigadier General.

MAJ Pesko informed the council that he has received complaints about COVID test reimbursements and the amount of home tests that will be sent to homes (4 will be sent, but some families have more than 4 members). He also inquired to the Garrison staff about the possibility of a testing site on the Post. MAJ Pesko informed the council that he will attend the Exchange/Commissary advisory meeting today in the Garrison Conference room.

#### **RSO comments:**

Ms. Zeitz indicated the CofS Retiree Council issues are due in October/November. BG Estes informed the council to start thinking about issue(s).

The 2022 RAD event is scheduled for Friday, 14 October at Sadoski Center.

The council meeting dates document will be emailed to the members.

#### **DHR/AG:**

Mr. Corbin informed the council that he will provide funding to print the Facebook flyer, but will need at least a two week notice.

Mr. Corbin provided information on the Fort Knox national cemetery.

He will check into blocking rooms for the April meeting and will check on cost.

Informed the council that the Fort Knox cemetery is a national shrine preserved by Garrison.

#### **Garrison Command:** CSM Fogle

CSM Fogle stated that he will look into the COVID testing site and the possibility to obtain more home tests for families with more than 4 members.

CSM Fogle informed the members to seek assistance from the Fort Knox VA Office with any VA issues/concerns.

CSM Fogle expressed his thanks and appreciation to the council member.

BG (Ret) Estes adjourned the meeting at 1100 hours, on Friday 22 January 2022.

/s/ Jolene Culpepper  
JOLENE CULPEPPER  
1SG (RET), USA  
Acting Secretary, Retiree Council

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