



## **FORT KNOX RETIREE COUNCIL**

**19 July 2024**

The Fort Knox Retiree Council was called to order at 0900 hours, Friday, 19 July 2024 in the DHR Conference Room by BG (Ret) Charles D. Estes, Chair, who presided.

BG (Ret) Estes welcomed everyone to the meeting and led the attendees into The Pledge of Allegiance. Then he began the meeting with a roll call of Retiree Council members:

Voting members present:

Charles D. Estes, BG (Ret), USA, Chair  
Rodney J. Newell, CSM (Ret), USA, Vice-Chair  
Belinda Gaither-Schmitt, SFC (Ret), USA, Secretary  
Jackie A. Ash, CSM (Ret), USA  
Franklin T. Brady, CSM (Ret), USA  
Betsy Brocklehurst, MSgt (Ret), USAF (via phone)  
Darren W. Hargrove, SGM (Ret), USA (via phone)  
Bernard Hayes, MAJ, (Ret), USA  
Michael Pesko, Jr., MAJ, (Ret), USA

Voting members absent:

Paul J Hettich, COL (Ret), USA

Non-voting members absent:

Thomas C. Cunningham, LTC (Ret) USA  
Harold Denson, 1SG (Ret), USA  
Glenda Nicol, MSG (Ret), USA  
Thomas A. Goff, CW5 (Ret), USA  
Georgie Sharp, CPL (Ret), USMC  
David Shearer, CW4 (Ret), USA  
Irvin Lyons, SGM (Ret), USA  
Mrs. Cathy Williamson, Volunteer

Garrison Command:

Mr. Jim Bradford, Deputy Garrison Commander

Non-voting council advisory members present:

Mr. Kevin Corbin, Civ, DHR/AG

Mrs. Gail Harding, DHR, RSO

BG (Ret) Estes informed the members that COL (Ret) Hettich is a new representative from Illinois on the Fort Knox Retiree Council.

**State reports:**

**Ohio:**

1. LEGISLATION ([www. Legislature.Ohio.gov](http://www.Legislature.Ohio.gov))

a. HB 1 (formerly SB 268) will allow all honorably discharged veterans to be exempt from paying property tax. Remains in House Committee.

b. SB 12 Regards veteran-owned business enterprise certification program, add Section 122.926 to ORC. Remains in Senate Committee.

c. SB 14 Expand veteran eligibility to teach without license, will amend sections 3319.074 and 3319.283 of the Revised Code to expand eligibility for veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces to be employed as teachers without licenses. Remains in Senate Committee.

d. SB 15 Authorize Military License Plate Program permanent registration. Remains in Senate Committee.

e. HB 53 Authorize refundable tax credits for hiring certain veterans. Remains in House Committee.

f. HB 60 Increase amount of and expand the homestead exemption. Remains in House Committee.

g. HB 69 Revise membership of county veterans service commissions. Remains in House Committee.

h. HB 90 Authorize property tax exemption for disabled veterans, spouses. Remains In House Committee.

2. PRIVILEGES

a. ID card available at DSCC in Columbus, appoints need to be made by calling 614-692-3141 or online at [HTTPS://IDCO.DMDC.OSD.MIL/IDCO/](https://IDCO.DMDC.OSD.MIL/IDCO/)

b. Ohio Department of Veterans Services, Veteran Benefits at [HTTPS://DVS.OHIO.GOV/VETERAN-BENEFITS](https://DVS.OHIO.GOV/VETERAN-BENEFITS)

c. Sunset of Ohio Veterans Bonus announced, 08.31.24

i. [WWW.OHIOVETS.GOV/VETERANSBONUS](http://WWW.OHIOVETS.GOV/VETERANSBONUS)

ii. The Ohio Veterans Bonus program received 770 applications in FY2023, requiring a payout of \$401,220.

iii. A total of 677 claims were paid in FY2023.

iv. As previously mentioned, the Bonus has paid out nearly \$78 million on more than 97,000 claims in its existence. Most of that has been supported by bonds.

v. Based on data available from the VA and other sources, there are approximately 32,000 Afghanistan veterans in Ohio.

d. Program Providing Hiring Bonus for Military, Spouses

i. [HTTPS://DVS.OHIO.GOV/WHAT-WE-DO/NEWS-AND-EVENTS/NEWS/GOV-ANNOUNCES-PROGRAM-PROVIDING-HIRING-BONUS-FOR-MILITARY-AND-SPOUSES](https://DVS.OHIO.GOV/WHAT-WE-DO/NEWS-AND-EVENTS/NEWS/GOV-ANNOUNCES-PROGRAM-PROVIDING-HIRING-BONUS-FOR-MILITARY-AND-SPOUSES)

ii. The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) and Ohio Department of Veterans Services (ODVS) introduced an initiative to encourage military members to continue their call to service by working in Ohio Schools.

iii. Military Recruit Award program

iv. Schools can now offer \$3000 hiring bonus for service members, veterans and their spouses; reimbursed by DEW

v. Districts can receive \$1500 bonus for hiring and recruiting an eligible military individual

3. MEDICAL – no current update

#### 4. COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- a. Retiree Appreciation Day (RAD)
  - i. Met with the state RSO in Dec 2023
  - ii. State RSO agreed to support a half day event in the Spring of 2025
- b. State RSO Retirement Seminars Planned (OH-TAPS)
  - i. Registration 0800-0830
  - ii. Seminar 0900-1600
  - iii. Regional Training Institute (RTI) Auditorium at DSCC in Columbus
  - iv. Dates: 09 Nov 23, 26 Jan 24 (Hybrid, In-Person and TEAMS), 18 May 24 – CSM Newell attended and spoke with Mr Lam (OH G1/J10), 19 May 24, 14 Sep 24, 15 Sep 24.
- c. Ohio DVS Advisory Council Meetings
  - i. No recent participation
  - ii. Re-establishing contact
  - iii. Quarterly meetings coincide with Ft Knox SFL meetings FY23
  - iv. Minutes are forwarded to state members after the quarterly meetings
- d. DAV Chapter 3 and DAV Auxiliary – Col (Ret) Cunningham is providing Physical Support Equipment of all kinds available to veterans across our council region.

#### 5. STATE RSO

- a. Dr. Glenn E. Spencer Jr. - Retirement/Transition Service Officer, [Glenn.e.spencer2.mil@army.mil](mailto:Glenn.e.spencer2.mil@army.mil), 614-336-7252(O), 614-572-9184 (C)
- b. Mr Hunter Sintobin, Reserve Component TA Advisor, [Hunter.s.sintobin.mil@army.mil](mailto:Hunter.s.sintobin.mil@army.mil), 614-336-7277 (O), 614-907-3316 (C)
- c. Met with the state RSO in Dec 2023
- d. Have developed a state charter and recently forwarded to the TAG for review

#### 6. STATE ALUMNI

- a. <https://www.ong.ohio.gov/members/ong/alumni/index.html>
- b. Working to establish contact and receive newsletter

#### 7. STATE MEETING

- a. Last meeting held 5/30/24
- b. Next meeting planned for September. CSM (Ret) Newell stated that he met with Retirees in Ohio to inquire about what their needs are and how we could support them.

CSM (Ret) Newell added that two Ohio servicemen from the 2<sup>nd</sup> OH Infantry received the Medal of Honor posthumously from the Civil War area.

Mr. Corbin brought up the issue that Ohio informed the Fort Knox Commander that they are out of money to support funeral services for veterans. Some local VFW's and American Legions are trying to cover some of the services. Although Fort Knox is responsible for the Ohio area, they do not have the manpower to cover the large number of funerals, about 100 a week. BG (Ret) Estes made the comment that it is not acceptable that a servicemember does not receive the final honor of a military burial.

#### Indiana:

1. Starting July 1, Indiana's Green Alert system will take effect. The Green Alert works similarly to a Silver or Amber Alert. This alert system will enable police departments to issue alerts for missing or at-risk veterans within 48 hours.
2. Neptune Society helps with military funerals in Indiana.
3. MAJ (Ret) Hayes inquired if he should order some of the AARP brochures to pass out at the RAD. These brochures discuss the issues and prevention of fraud against veterans. He was asked to bring about 500 to the RAD.

**Illinois:****1. LEGISLATION:**

a. SB 3749 Consumer Fraud (veterans) Re, deceptive practices targeting veterans and military members. Bill passed.

b. SB 2751 Disabled veteran's permit. A veteran with a disability or veteran caregiver shall not be charged any building permit fee for improvements to their residence of the veteran with a disability. Bill passed.

2. Friends of the 85th Retiree Committee will conduct a luncheon on Thursday, 14 November 2024. Our guest speaker is Greg Padovani, Chairman, Veterans Memorial Committee of Arlington Heights, IL.

**Kentucky:**

1. The Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs received a large budget for this fiscal year to operate the four Kentucky Veterans Homes and the five State Veterans Cemeteries without any shortcomings.

2. HB 86 established to expand interment eligibility in Kentucky state veterans' cemeteries to include eligible National Guard and Reserve service members and their families.

**RAD 2024:**

1. Mr. Corbin informed the Council that the RAD will be in Sadowski Hall on 18 October 2024. Vendors will be set up from 0900 – 1300. BG (Ret) Estes stated that Baptist Health will set up two tables at the RAD. He is also trying to have Norton Health set up a table.

2. Mr. Corbin confirmed that the first IPR for the RAD is scheduled for 8 August 2024 at 1000.

3. Mr. Corbin also suggested that the council members research getting some of the Fort Knox authorized Food Trucks to the RAD. There is only a limited amount of Food Trucks allowed and these trucks are set up every Friday at the PX. Mr. Corbin emphasized again that the Command cannot help in any way with the solicitation of funds to help with the RAD and that the Retiree Council members should ask local businesses to help with funding and gift certificates. During the discussion of monetary support for the RAD, Mr. Bradford suggested to contact Mr. Iacocca at the Knox Regional Development Alliance (KRDA).

**Garrison Command:**

Mr. Bradford confirmed that the Garrison Commander RAD letter is being processed.

**Discussion:**

Mr. Corbin informed BG (Ret) Estes that he has the funding to pay for a minimum of 2 meetings for 2 voting members per State. He also mentioned again that Retire Council members should check with their State TAGs if they can help with the funding. BG (Ret) Estes asked the Retire Council members to also check with their State if they can help with the travel funding. The inability of the Fort Knox DHR to fund the travel for the Fort Knox Retiree Council members is making it difficult for the council leadership to recruit new members to attend meetings and help with improving the Retiree Council Program and supporting Veterans and their families in the local communities.

**Chief of Staff issues:**

1. Request to increase the Fort Knox DHR budget to support the funding of the Retiree Council members coming from Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio. CSM (Ret) Brady was asked to complete a write up for this issue.

2. Military funeral honors are a benefit earned by all who served honorably in the US Armed Forces and are provided free of charge as a last “thank you” from a grateful nation. The inability to fund military funerals in the Fort Knox area of responsibility is unacceptable. As mentioned earlier Ohio informed the Fort Knox Garrison Commander that they do not have the budget to support any more military funerals. With the number of funerals taking place every week, the Fort Knox Garrison is overwhelmed and does not have the manpower to complete the mission. We are losing the last of our WWII veterans, and many from the Korean and Vietnam War area, and money should not be spared to provide the last honor to these great American Veterans.

BG (Ret) Estes adjourned the meeting at 1000 hours, Friday, 19 July 2024. The next meeting will be at 1500 on 18 October 2024, following the RAD.

/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