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The West Virginia Legislative Select Committee on Veterans' Affairs met each month during the 2013-2014 interim period beginning in June 2013 and ending in January 2014 to discuss and study topics relating to issues facing veterans, their families, and ways to enhance benefits available to them. At its meetings, the committee received testimony from the following individuals:

June

Mr. John Looney, Clinical Social Worker, United States Department of Veterans' Affairs

Mr. Looney appeared before the committee at its meeting in Wheeling, West Virginia to present information relating to services and benefits available to veterans. He also spoke about the availability of veteran services located within the northern panhandle and how services and opportunities can translate to across state borders.

July

Secretary Rick Thompson, West Virginia Department of Veterans' Assistance

Secretary Thompson appeared before the committee to present information and updates to ongoing projects and programs within the Department of Veterans' Assistance. Additionally, Secretary Thompson spoke about initiatives that he intended to develop within the department as he was recently nominated to fill the position.

August

Secretary Joe Thornton, West Virginia Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety

Secretary Thornton appeared before the committee to present information regarding the Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety, including: crisis and emergency management in the wake of the 2012 derecho and Hurricane Sandy, security and safety at the 2013 Boy Scout Jamboree, and details on the West Virginia FUSION Intelligence Center. During his presentation and by leave of the committee, Mr. Tom Kirk, Director of the West Virginia FUSION Intelligence Center, offered additional details.

September

Mr. Skip Gebhart, Veterans Coordinator, West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission

Mr. Gebhart appeared to the committee and spoke about veterans' education opportunities, including details on the New G.I. Bill and legislation passed by West Virginia the previous year. Additionally, Mr. Gebhart discussed some upcoming federal legislation and action that would affect the state's institutions of higher education and its military veteran students.

BGEN David Buckalew, West Virginia National Guard

BGEN Buckalew appeared before the committee to provide updates on various aspects of the West Virginia National Guard.

October

Secretary Rick Thompson, West Virginia Department of Veterans' Assistance

Secretary Thompson appeared before the committee to discuss the issues raised during his listening tour of the state's veterans facilities within five geographic regions and his efforts to bolster the social work activities of the Department of Veterans' Assistance. During his presentation and by leave of the committee, Ms. Kasey Voloski and Mr. Rodney Browning, social workers, West Virginia Department of Veterans' Assistance, offered in-depth details about each of their assigned geographical districts.

Mr. Skip Gebhart, Veterans Coordinator, West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission

Mr. Gebhart briefly appeared before the committee to offer followup information from his previous appearance and to provide additional insights into the remarks made by Secretary Thompson.

November

BGEN David Buckalew, West Virginia National Guard

BGEN Buckalew appeared before the committee to provide information regarding how the 2013 federal government shutdown affected the West Virginia National Guard and how future federal budget cuts would impact the WVNG.

Dr. Joseph Scotti, Ph.D., WHOLE Veterans

Dr. Scotti appeared before the committee to offer additional information regarding the regarding new information on suicide risks and statistics for veterans, as well as, a brief overview of his new startup named WHOLE Veterans. Dr. Scotti also provided an update to the 2012 statewide military veterans' survey as commissioned by the Select Committee of Veterans' Affairs and funded by the Joint Committee on Government and Finance.

December

Dr. Patrick Crane, Project Manager, WV Bridging the Gap Consortium, Community & Technical College System of West Virginia

Dr. Crane appeared before the committee to present information regarding education issues facing veterans and information regarding a recent grant to the state's community and technical colleges awarded by the US Department of Labor.

The committee took action on and recommended the introduction of the following legislation to the Joint Committee

on Government and Finance:

HCR/SCR *** - Requesting the Joint Committee on Government and Finance to continue studying the needs, challenges, and issues facing West Virginia military veterans, West Virginia citizens serving in the Armed Forces of the United States, the West Virginia National Guard and other military affairs of the state of West Virginia.

Respectfully submitted,



Senator Erik Wells
Chairman



Delegate Richard J. Iaquina
Chairman



Delegate Barbara Evans Fleischauer
Chairwoman