

Select Committee B- Veterans' Issues

Interim Report to the Joint Committee on Government and Finance
January 6, 2008

Senate Members

Senator Hunter, Co-Chair
Senator Foster
Senator Jenkins
Senator Wells
Senator Barnes
Senator Deem

House Members

Delegate Fleischauer, Co-Chair
Delegate Iaquina, Co-Chair
Delegate Longstreth
Delegate Stephens
Delegate Yost
Delegate Azinger
Delegate Tansill

The Joint Committee on Government and Finance requested Select Committee B- Veterans' Issues consider the following study resolution during the 2007-2008 Interim period:

House Concurrent Resolution 75 - Requesting the Joint Committee on Government and Finance to make a study of the needs of soldiers and veterans who have been injured in the Iraq/Afghanistan wars.

Select Committee B- Veterans' Issues met each month during the Interim period to discuss the needs and issues facing veterans, the current state of veteran benefits, and ways to bridge the gap between Federal and State services. The Committee considered testimony from state agencies and other organizations as follows:

West Virginia Council of Churches

Reverend Dennis Sparks and Reverend Ricardo Flippin provided an overview of their program, "When Our Military Members Are Deployed: Supporting West Virginia Military Members and Their Families."

Huntington Veterans Affairs Medical Center

Edward Seiler, Director, gave an overview of the Huntington VAMC's and the Veterans' Health Administration's operations.

West Virginia University's Health Sciences Center, Rural Health Division

Hilda Heady, Associate Vice President, gave an overview of Rural Health Education Partnerships and work at VA Training Sites. Ms. Heady gave recommendations to the Committee on how better the state may assist rural veterans and soldiers with regard to receipt of health care.

Charleston Area Veterans' Center

Jesse Coulter gave an overview of the Vet Centers' operations and roles in providing support to veterans.

West Virginia Division of Veterans' Affairs

Robbie Robinson, Veteran's Service Officer, Martinsburg Field Office, discussed various aspects of his position and his office's role in supporting veterans.

West Virginia Veterans' Home

Larry Blackaby, Administrator, presented to the Committee information on available resources to homeless veterans.

West Virginia Division of Veterans' Affairs

Larry Linch, Director, presented to the Committee an update on the progress of the Veterans nursing home in Clarksburg, West Virginia and gave information about the new Veterans State cemetery to be built in Institute, West Virginia. Director Linch also gave an update on West Virginia's participation in the State's Benefits Seamless Transition Program.

West Virginia Adjutant General's Office

Major General Allen E. Tackett, Adjutant General, spoke on the West Virginia National Guard and services available to veterans and their families during and post deployment.

Thanks, Plain and Simple.

Anne Montague spoke to the Committee on the role the organization plays in helping deployed service members, veterans, and their families. Woody Williams spoke to the Committee about creating a monument dedicated to the mothers of veterans in West Virginia.

Volunteers of America

Mandell Smith, Program Manager for Homeless Veterans in West Virginia, Volunteers of America, spoke to the Committee about his organization's role in helping homeless veterans in dealing with substance abuse, employment, and living quarters.


West Virginia University

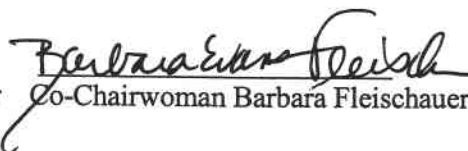
Joseph R. Scotti, Ph. D., Professor of Clinical Psychology gave the preliminary findings of the state wide veterans' survey.

The Committee drafted letters to the following individuals:

1. The Joint Committee on Government and Finance- Requesting the funding to perform a statewide survey of veterans' needs, services, and concerns;
2. Governor Joe Manchin- Requesting that the Governor add to his Budget Proposal \$50,000.00 for the purchase of Evacusleds for the nursing home facility in Clarksburg, West Virginia;
3. Brian Noland, Chancellor of the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission- Requesting that the Chancellor identify social workers and psychologists as "shortage areas" in order to be eligible for the Health Sciences Scholarship Program.

Respectfully submitted,


Co-Chairman Jon Blair Hunter


Co-Chairwoman Barbara Fleischauer


Co-Chairman Richard J Iaquina