

**Minutes from the Vietnam War Commemoration Advisory Committee Meeting
Public Session
February 20, 2015**

The Vietnam War Commemoration Advisory Committee (VWCAC) is a federal advisory committee within the Department of Defense (DoD) operating pursuant to the Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972, the Government in Sunshine Act of 1976, and other relevant federal regulations. The VWCAC meets three times a year and held its first public session on February 20, 2015 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 PM in the main ballroom of the Spates Community Club, 214 McNair Road, Ft Myer, Virginia.

VWCAC Members

Hon. Tom Ridge (Chairman)
Mr. Paul Bucha
LtGen(R) George Christmas
Mr. Don Clarke
Mr. C.R. "Dick" Anderegg
LTG(R) Roger Schultz
Mr. Jerome Johnson
Mrs. Jeanette Early

DoD Sponsor

Rhodes, Michael (Director of Administration, DoD)

VWCAC Supporting Staff

Mr. Mark Franklin (Designated Federal Officer)
Mr. Mike Gable (Vietnam War Commemoration)
Ms. Devon Hardy (Vietnam War Commemoration)
Mr. Phil Waite (Vietnam War Commemoration)
Ms. Yvonne Schilz (Vietnam War Commemoration)
Mr. Jose Ramos (Vietnam War Commemoration)

Public Session Attendees

5 members of the public attended the session.

PUBLIC SESSION

At 1:00 PM, Mark Franklin, DFO, opened the public sessions, made administrative comments and explained the procedures for conducting the meeting. The Chairman, Mr. Tom Ridge, made opening remarks and highlighted that in our last meeting, the Advisory Committee made some very specific recommendations to the Commemoration staff, that were heeded and acted upon to deal with a couple of critical issues in an urgent and thoughtful way.

Staff Presentations

Members from the Vietnam War Commemoration presented the Advisory Committee the following updates and briefings:

- Joint Meeting of Congress Update
- History and Legacy program update
- Strategy and Engagement Initiatives

Deliberation of Advisory Group Recommendations

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1. Congressional Ceremony. Ms. Hardy provided the concept of the ceremony and updated the advisory committee on the current state of play, to include possible dates and times, the specific location and proposed guests and speakers for the event.

The Advisory Committee recommended Emancipation Hall as the preferred venue for the Congressional Ceremony as it would accommodate a larger audience and allow us to invite more Vietnam veterans and that an afternoon event would be preferable to a morning event as it would facilitate greater Congressional attendance. The Advisory Committee also recommended that, if possible, we televise the ceremony via C-Span and / or video stream the ceremony to sites across the country. There were several suggestions as to who would be the most appropriate speaker and it was also recommended that the guests include appropriate representation from Gold Star family members.

2. History and Legacy Update. Mr. Franklin explained that we changed the name from History and Education to History and Legacy Branch to more accurately reflect our mission, which is to tell the story about the Vietnam War veterans and their families and help America better understand and appreciate their service and sacrifice. He then provided an overview of the primary components of the History and Legacy program: written and photographic content, primary sources and references, middle school and high school service learning opportunities, and video-recorded oral history interviews of Vietnam veterans and their family members.

The advisory committee recommended that the Commemoration take a more strategic approach and reach out to national and federal organizations such as the National Education Association and the DoD Education Activity, the larger historical associations such as the Society of Military Historians, and even writing to the governors of each state asking them to reach down to their various state departments of education. Governor Ridge also suggested contacting the National American Legion to see how we might partner with their essay contest.

Concerning the oral history program, LtGen Christmas recommended that History and Legacy contact the Witness to War project, an organization that video-records the experiences and stories of combat veterans from all wars, to include Vietnam. He suggested that we share each other's interviews which would add to our current collection.

3. Strategy and Engagement. Mr. Waite introduced himself as the lead for Strategy and Engagement and provided our current strategy for how we thank and honor our veterans. He identified the critical facts bearing on the problem and our measures of effectiveness to ensure an accurate accounting for our report to Congress at the end of the Commemoration period. He also illuminated the scope of our effort by explaining that if all of our current Commemorative Partners conduct the required two events a year over the next three years, that would come close to 40,000 events around the country that thank and honor our veterans. Mr. Waite went on to explain the mechanisms that we developed for tracking numbers of veterans and family members. Finally, Mr. Waite explained the 5 strategic initiatives and 47 supporting operational initiatives that will assist us in successfully accomplishing our mission.

Governor Ridge offered that we should focus our efforts on the next three years, because interest, enthusiasm and the commitment will begin to wane dramatically after the first couple of years. He also offered to assist us with connecting to the National Governors Association annual meetings and see if we can get on their calendar to bring them up to date.

Mr. Waite explained that the Commemoration sent letters to the governors of all 50 states and that to date, 35 of the 50 states had signed up to become Commemorative partners. 15 states had yet to respond to our letters. The Chairman asked if there was a common denominator

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among those 15 states. Mr. Waite informed that we do not but we will research that, but also that many of these states had new governors who were just elected in January.

The Chairman informed that members of the National Governors Association attend an annual meeting in the fall, and offered to identify the dates and the Chairs of those meetings with the intent that we take the opportunity to meet with them when they are in town.

LtGen(R) Christmas suggested that advisory committee members should reach out to their network within each of the services and encourage them to become more involved.

Col(R) Anderegg cautioned that the advisory committee members need to clarify that they are speaking as a private citizen who has the privilege and honor to serve on this committee and that they are not speaking on behalf of the U.S. Government.

The discussion then moved to the need for a communications plan that clearly identifies how we will reach out to Vietnam veterans and their families. The Strategy and Engagement team will address this at the next FAC meeting.

The Chairman proposed the Advisory Committee convene the next meeting sometime in April or May but before Memorial Day.

A copy of the Advisory Committee's briefing and these minutes may be found at http://www.vietnamwar50th.com/vietnam_war_advisory_committee/

ADJOURNMENT

At the recommendation of the Chairman, the DFO, Mr. Mark Franklin, adjourned the VWCAC February 20, 2014 public session at 3:30 PM.

I hereby certify, to the best of my knowledge, that the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.



Tom Ridge
Chairman
Vietnam War Commemoration Advisory Committee