

MINUTES FROM THE UNITED VETERANS' GROUPS OF OREGON (UVGO)

MEETING

SATURDAY, 14 October 2023

HELD VIA ZOOM VIDEO TELECONFERENCE

Meeting called to order by **Chair, Mary J. Mayer**, at **1201**.

Pledge of Allegiance

Invocation was done on an individual basis

Roll Call of Organizations/Voting Members: 12 of 14

- **Regular Members Present were:**
 - AFA (Bill Tidd)
 - American Legion (Kevin Owens)
 - AUSA (Bill Crist)
 - DAV (Henry Hamel)
 - 40 + 8 (Lou Neubecker)
 - KWVA (David Penaflor, Dick Frey)
 - MCL (Flynn Phillips)
 - MOAA (Tom Majchrowski)
 - MOPH (Todd Swanson)
 - NAAV (Fred Shafer)
 - NCOA (Robert Haltiner)
 - VVA (Thom Weiss)

- **Regular Members Absent were:**
 - PVA Tri-State
 - VFW

Associate Member Present: DAV Auxiliary (Karen Haltiner)

Officers (Other than Those Representing a Regular Member Organization) Present were:

- Chair (Mary J. Mayer)
- First Vice Chair (John Lee)
- Secretary (Marco Oswald)

Other Attendees were:

- Dr. Nakeia Council Daniels (ODVA Interim Director)
- Jay DeFillipo (ODVA Legislative Director)
- Nicole Hoeft (ODVA Strategic Communications Division Director; Zoom Host)
- Jon Taylor, ODVA Tribal Veterans Coordinator

CHAIR'S COMMENTS: Chair **Mary J. Mayer** welcomed all members and guests to the second regularly scheduled virtual UVGO Meeting of the 2023-2024 program year. Chair Mayer extended a particular welcome to Dr. Nakeia Council Daniels, Interim Director of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA), upon the recent retirement of former ODVA Director Kelly Fitzpatrick. The Chair affirmed that expanding the membership and active participation of the UVGO was a paramount strategic objective for the current program year. The Chair reviewed other UVGO Strategic Goals for the 2023-2024 program year:

- Continue to increase the effectiveness, visibility, and actual impact of the UVGO.
- Invite guest speakers that are key veterans' advocacy stakeholders to UVGO meetings to exchange information and strategies including critical legislation and other Veterans' issues.
- Identify legislation to adopt and champion in the next Legislative Session.

SECRETARY'S REPORT: The motion was made and seconded that the minutes of the 22 July 2023 UVGO Meeting be approved; the motion was passed unanimously. Secretary Marco Oswald stated that this current UVGO Zoom meeting was being recorded, as will all future Zoom UVGO Meetings. The recorded meeting greatly aides in the preparation and accuracy of the minutes, and the link will be available to any UVGO members upon email request to the Secretary. The Chair polled the UVGO membership and noted no objection to the recording of the meetings.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Treasurer Robert Haltiner reported a beginning balance as of 25 June 2023 of \$4,942.89. A total of \$247.50 in income from dues was collected. No expenses were incurred. The ending balance as of 14 October 2023 is \$5,190.39. The Treasurer reiterated that the UVGO fiscal year runs from 1 July to 30 June; annual dues are required by 1 July each year. Dues are \$55.00 for regular UVGO members and \$27.50 for associate UVGO members. The Treasurer listed the six UVGO member organizations that need to pay current dues. The motion was made and seconded to approve the Financial Report of the 14 October 2023 UVGO Meeting; the motion passed unanimously.

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS UPDATE:

ODVA Interim Director **Dr. Nakeia Daniels** introduced herself as a fellow Veteran, coming from a large family and who grew up in a very large church. She feels quite comfortable in this forum of fellow Veterans.

- Dr. Daniels read the departing statement made by former ODVA Director Kelly Fitzpatrick, who retired on 1 October 2023.
- Dr. Daniels indicated that she expects to serve as ODVA Interim Director for 90-180 days, until the recruitment process for the permanent director concludes. Dr. Daniels stated she is a candidate for the position. She affirmed that ODVA will stand firmly behind Governor Kotek's decision to nominate a new permanent director.
- Dr. Daniels comes from a family that has a strong history of service with the U.S. Armed Forces. She is herself an Army Veteran, a military spouse of over 20 years, and her son is currently serving in the USAR. Dr. Daniels has served two Oregon administrations working in Veterans Affairs, and she has a doctorate in business administration. Dr. Daniels provided a review of the following ODVA priorities:

ODVA Veterans Grant Programs

- Dr. Daniels said the Campus Veterans Resource Center Grant award process is a current ODVA priority. The 2023 Oregon legislature approved up to one million dollars for the 2023-2025 Campus Veteran Resource Center Grant program, which opened for new grant applications on 31 July 2023. The purpose of the Campus Veteran Resource Center Grant program is to augment and enhance the capabilities of university and college Veteran Resource Centers to support Veterans in their academic and vocational pursuits. Grants will be offered up to \$250,000 per institution. Grant awards will be announced on 1 November 2023. Dr. Daniels also encouraged UVGO members to publicize the availability of individual grant resources (up to \$5,000 per lifetime) for Veterans who are in a program of study and who meet the financial criteria for a grant award. Lastly, the application window for Veterans Service grants opened on 18 September 2023. These grants help improve the provision of essential services to Veterans, in both rural and urban communities, in areas such as transportation, housing, medical services,

behavioral health, and employment opportunities. Proposals are due on 23 October 2023. Please consult the ODVA website for more specific information.

Veterans Service Officer Annual Training

- The Veterans Service Officer (VSO) annual training conference commences 23-27 October in Pendleton. Training in the filing and processing of PACT Act claims will receive special emphasis.

High-Level VA Delegation to Oregon

- ODVA will join VA Deputy Secretary Tanya Bradsher, herself a decorated Army Veteran with many years of veterans' affairs service, during her tour of the White City and Roseburg VA facilities. Dr. Daniels stated she places utmost importance on partnering with Federal and private entities to advance veterans' issues.
- Dr. Daniels thanked the UVGO for its supportive partnership with ODVA, and, in particular, to those members who have volunteered to serve on grant review panels.

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:

- ODVA Legislative Director **Jay DeFillipo**, encouraged all to subscribe to the ODVA Veteran Bill Digest he creates every week of the active legislative session by accessing: <https://www.oregon.gov/odva/Connect/Pages/Legislation.aspx> The hyperlink also provides access to all of the weekly legislative updates from the 2022-2023 long session, including the 30 June 2023 final closeout update.
- Jay stated that he was concluding his first year in the position as ODVA Legislative Director, and that he had developed strong relationships with legislators and non-governmental entities who are passionately committed to bettering the lives of Oregon's 270,000 Veterans.
- Oregon legislators spent the past summer between the end of the last long legislative session and the start of the upcoming short session largely meeting with and working on individual constituent concerns and requests. But it was also a time for significant rule-making that implements legislation enacted in the last session. Two veterans bills were of particular focus:
 - HB 2147 (aka the "Cremains Bill") for screening and processing unclaimed remains for ascertaining veterans' status. Governor Kotek conducted a ceremonial signing ceremony for the bill, putting the bill into force and effect on 1 January 2024. Jay said he was leading a Rules Advisory Committee, doing outreach, and establishing connections with the myriad of entities who will have

a role to play in identifying remains. The comprehensive rules established by the Committee should greatly assist the successful implementation of HB 2147.

- HB 2271 (Veterans Educational Bill) expanded eligibility of the program and benefits, and it required modification of the implementing rules to realize the objectives of the bill.
- The Oregon Legislature has returned from the summer and will hold a series of three “legislative days” to lay the foundation for the upcoming “short session” of the legislature. Legislative days were held on 27-29 September, with ODVA providing informational briefings to both the House and Senate Veterans committees. Of particular interest was the condition of the estimated 1,400 homeless veterans in Oregon, as a subset of the Governor’s intense focus on homelessness in general.
- Jay stated that while proposals to expand the scope of veteran pension and property tax relief in the past session were not enacted, the concepts remain very much alive in the hearts and minds of strong proponents who favor the initiatives. Unfortunately, they face strong competing interests among other sectors and concerns about revenue and fiscal impact. While it is very unlikely to see these proposals introduced in the coming short session, the concepts are in no way “dead.”
- The next legislative days are 6-8 November, followed by the last legislative days session on 10-12 January 2024. The short legislative session commences on 5 February 2024, and runs for 35 legislative days. The principal focus of the short session is on updating revenue and budgets, and on adjustments to legislation previously enacted. While legislators may introduce new bills and modifications during the short session, agencies are generally prohibited from introducing new initiatives of their own. The Governor has some new issues for consideration, and again, homelessness will likely be a principal focus. The various committees have yet to release their programs for the short session.
- During the closing discussion, MOAA (Tom Majchrowski) related that his organization had recently established a more formal liaison connection between MOAA Oregon’s Legislative Coordinator and the UVGO Legislative Committee. The goal is to ensure that MOAA Oregon’s legislative efforts on behalf of its organization are, as much as possible, complimentary to UVGO Legislative Committee efforts. UVGO Chair Mary Mayer endorsed the initiative, and stated that other UVGO organizations, like the American Legion, were involved in the same effort. Mary stated that many UVGO members independently advocate before the legislature for their organizations to good effect. Coordination with UVGO’s Legislative Committee can only improve veteran advocacy efforts, and, in many cases, serve as a force multiplier for consolidated positions.

- Lastly, Jay emphasized the fantastic working relationship developed with the UVGO and, in particular, with the UVGO Legislative Committee.

UVGO LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE UPDATE:

- Legislative Committee Chair **John Lee** emphasized that he welcomed greater UVGO member input on legislative affairs and priorities, and he urged UVGO members to feel free to contact him via email or by phone (johnwlee@centurytel.net; 541-401-2563). John stated that individual veteran testimony in support of the successful Cremains Bill was crucial and helped convince lawmakers that the initiative was of significant concern to the greater veteran community.
- John reminded members that the UVGO can only support legislation if there is unanimous consent among the voting UVGO membership ---- if just one organization objects, the UVGO cannot support the bill (but individual UVGO member organizations can). Naturally, many particular veterans' groups have a primary focus on their core issue ----- disabled veterans rights, for example ---- and may come at issues with a slightly different viewpoint. It is critical that in our advocacy before the legislature, we advance those issues for which our organization really stands. But we can only improve veteran's advocacy by talking and collaborating closely among us.
- Remember, that in the upcoming short session, it really is short! Legislators may individually introduce only up to two bills (in the long session the limit is eight). John expects that as in past short sessions, the House Veterans Committee will submit an "omnibus bill" that bundles many of the proposed veteran's issues from the last session into a single draft bill. Often, these omnibus bills clear the House Veterans Committee but arrive to the Senate with insufficient time for consideration of what is now a complex bill ---- and they consequently die in the committee. Expect very few, if any, veteran's bills to be passed in this short session. However, John added, sometimes a draft bill submitted in the short session is a "trial balloon," for the upcoming long session. These bills may not get passed in the short session, but they receive exposure, comment, and critique that allow the proposals to be revised and polished for submission in the long session.
- Legislative Committee Vice-Chair **Marco Oswald** said that the lower operational tempo of the short session can provide an opportunity to hone our legislative priorities for the 2024-2025 long session. Before our next UVGO meeting in January, the Legislative Committee will be sending to each UVGO member representative a short survey to help ascertain member legislative priorities. The results from the survey will be discussed at the January 2024 UVGO Meeting with a view to focusing our strategy and charting commonalities. How UVGO member organizations circulate and compile their responses

to the survey is completely at the members' discretion. Results and discussion from the survey will help the UVGO assign metrics to an area that is often hard to quantify.

- Chair Mayer commented that the last legislative days in January 2024 end just one day before our next UVGO meeting on 13 January 2024, so we should have some idea what veteran's issues may be presented before the House and Senate Committees. While we certainly need to strategize now for the 2024-2025 long session, we should still be in a good position to champion appropriate veteran's issues should they arise in the upcoming short session.
- VVA (Tom Weiss) requested that the survey be sent to the UVGO member organization representatives, in addition to any mailing to organization leadership. Mary confirmed that the survey will be provided only to the UVGO Representative for our member organizations ----- it is their discretion how to circulate and compile results. Tom also stated, for the record, that the VVA has a laser focus on SB884, which would provide an expanded property tax exemption for disabled veterans.
- Mary also reminded UVGO members that, if circumstances and timing warrant, the UVGO can meet quickly in an extraordinary "out of cycle" meeting to make decisions on issues or legislation in advance of a scheduled meeting.

GUEST SPEAKER:

- **Mr. Jon Taylor**, ODVA Tribal Veterans Coordinator, and Navy Veteran. After a full career in the Navy and prior to joining ODVA, Jon served six years as a Compliance Manager for the Oregon State Police, Tribal Gaming Section, where he established critical, trusting relationships with Oregon's tribal governments. Jon's PowerPoint presentation is attached to these minutes. Some highlights include:
 - American Indians represent an estimated 3,856 of all Oregon Veterans, coming from all nine federally recognized Nations in Oregon
 - Native American Indians historically serve in the Armed Forces at rates disproportionately higher than other ethnic/racial groups
 - Notwithstanding ODVA's long history of close working relationships with American Indians in Oregon, Jon is the first person to serve in ODVA's newly established and specific position of Tribal Veterans Coordinator
 - Jon said his job is to continue to (1) build strong relationships with Tribal Veterans, with Tribal VSOs and Advocates, and the VA's own office of Tribal Affairs, and (2) to ensure ODVA programs serve their unique and diverse needs
 - Jon is personally working hard to complete his certification as a USDVA Veteran Service Officer

- Jon described the various funding opportunities available to Oregon's federally recognized Tribes and Tribal Veterans
- ODVA currently has established MOUs with 3 of the 9 Oregon Tribes for the provision of specific Tribal Veteran Services Officers (TVSO); a fourth MOU is being finalized
- Tribal Veterans Advocates perform supplemental services to the Tribes
- Since 2015, ODVA has hosted an annual TVSO conference to provide cutting-edge training to TVSOs, Tribal Advocates, Tribal senior leadership, and federal and NGO partners, including culturally specific training and information

NEW BUSINESS

- **Officers for 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 (2 Year Terms)**
 - Chair: Mary J. Mayer, AFA
 - First Vice Chair: John Lee, American Legion
 - Second Vice Chair: Henry Hamel, DAV
 - Secretary: Marco Oswald, MOAA
 - Treasurer: Robert Haltiner, NCOA
 - Immediate Past Chair: Wayne Harvey
- **Appointments:**
 - Chaplain: Toni Cordell, American Legion
 - Legislative Committee:
 - Chair: John Lee, American Legion
 - Vice Chair: Marco Oswald, MOAA
 - Governance Committee Chair: Mary J. Mayer, AFA
- **Meeting Schedule for 2023-2024**
 - Saturday, January 13, 2024
 - Saturday, April 13, 2024
- **Meeting Location Choices:**
 - Virtual via Zoom
 - **Center 50+ (Salem Senior Center), 2615 Portland Road NE, Salem, OR 97301**
- **Recruitment of New Veteran Service Organizations for UVGO Membership**
 - Chair Mayer stated that, in addition to possible Oregon Tribal service organization membership, the UVGO is actively recruiting other Veteran organizations for inclusion in the UVGO family. Member suggestions are welcome.

FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER:

- **NCOAA** (Robert Haltiner) – Memorial medallions for WWII, Korean, and Vietnam Veterans are available upon request. Korean and Vietnam Veterans medallions are \$23.00/ea.
- **MOPH** (Todd Swanson) – On 5 November 2023 the Blue and Gold Star Plaques dedication is at the Beaverton Veterans Memorial Park. Todd represented Oregon at the 2023 Patriot Purple Heart Mission in New York.
- **AUSA** (Bill Crist) – AUSA sponsored at Oregon City High School an Armed Forces recruiting event featuring multifunction 18-wheeler tactical vehicles. AUSA continues to award Minuteman Scholarships offering tuition and/or living expense scholarships to students who accept USAR commissions. AUSA is active in supporting Oregon's VA retirement homes.
- **VVA** (Tom Weiss) – Tom provided the latest information on the Oregon Capitol Vietnam Veterans Memorial. VVA is supporting the Oregon Vietnam Veterans War Memorial effort through the sale of commemorative medallions; please contact Tom for details. Memorial planning also includes a future project for Vietnamese Veterans who served in the conflict alongside the U.S. Armed Forces.
- **ODVA** (Nicole Hoeft) – Please join ODVA and others for a ceremony honoring Veterans Day, 11 November, at 1100, at the Oregon State Capitol Park, Salem.

ITEMS OF INTEREST:

- The Oregon Military Museum Project will conduct a "Memorials of World War II" Tour – June 24-July 3, 2024; if you are interested in the tour, please contact Maj Gen Dan O'Hollaren, USAF (Ret) at 503-780-4735 or danoh73@comcast.net

MEETING RECORD: UVGO Meetings are recorded on Zoom. To request an emailed copy of the recorded meeting, please contact UVGO Secretary, Marco Oswald, at: viaboeca17@gmail.com. The file is approximately 1.38GB.

The next **UVGO Meeting** will be held on **Saturday, 20 January 2024** from **1200** to **1400** via **Zoom Video Teleconference**. The meeting was adjourned at **1354**.

Respectfully submitted,

Reviewed by:

MARCO OSWALD

UVGO Secretary
42154 N River Dr
Sweet Home, OR 97386
Cell Phone: 541-409-4146

MARY J. MAYER

UVGO Chair
P.O. Box 13408
Portland, OR 97213-4004
Cell Phone: 310-897-1902