

(Draft - Awaiting Formal Approval)
**MINUTES OF THE
VETERANS REINTEGRATION TASK FORCE**
Friday, July 31, 2012 – 9:00 a.m. – Room 445 State Capitol

Members Present:

Sen. Peter C. Knudson, Senate Chair
Rep. Bradley M. Daw, House Chair
Sen. Karen Mayne
Rep. Tim M. Cosgrove
LTC Brent Baxter
Mr. Blair K. Carruth
Mr. Bart Davis
Mr. Brent Kelsey
Mr. Terry D. Schow
Mr. Rick Schwermer
Mr. Lincoln Shurtz

Members Absent:

Rep. Val L. Peterson
Dr. W. David Patton
Mr. Jon Pierpont
Mr. Mark B. Steinagel

Staff Present:

Mr. Richard C. North, Policy Analyst
Ms. Tracey Fredman, Legislative Secretary

Note: A list of others present, a copy of related materials, and an audio recording of the meeting can be found at www.le.utah.gov.

1. Committee Business

Chair Ray called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. Chair Ray excused Rep. Peterson, Mr. Pierpont, Dr. Patton, and Mr. Steinagel from the meeting.

Chair Ray acknowledged Ms. Karla Aguirre, Assistant Director, Workforce Development Division Program and Training, and Mr. Joseph Demma, Director of Communications, Department of Workforce Services, representing Mr. Pierpont, and Dr. Marc Babitz, Division Director, Division of Family Health and Preparedness, Utah Department of Health, representing Dr. Patton.

MOTION: Sen. Knudson moved to approve the minutes of the July 6, 2012 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. Schow moved that the Veterans Reintegration Task Force include Frank Maughan, Brian Garrett, and Dr. David Rudd as task force members. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Task Force Agency Members Reports - What Services are Provided for Veterans?

Mr. Davis briefed task force members on his work as Transition Assistance Advisor and state chairman of Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve in coordinating and connecting veterans to the benefits, services, and employment opportunities they need.

Mr. Schow distributed and reviewed "Utah Department of Veterans Affairs."

Ms. Aguirre and Mr. Demma distributed a packet containing "Department of Workforce Services, Utah's Job Connection - Overview of Services to Employers," "Economic Service Areas, Service Areas Directors, Office locations," "Veteran Employment Services," "Veterans Services," and "Veteran Employment Services, ACE Program."

Ms. Aguirre also distributed and discussed the information presented in "Services to Veterans - Summary Data SFY 2012."

Task force discussion followed. Ms. Aguirre and Mr. Demma responded to task force members' questions.

Rep. Cosgrove asked how employment data for veterans is collected, and what recommendations can be made to connect veterans with employment and other assistance service needs.

Mr. Davis commented on the "Hero 2 Hired" website provided by the U.S. Department of Defense, and stated that Utah has a similar program called "The Utah Veterans and Military Employment Coalition." He stated that there are employers anxious to hire veterans, and that the issue is connecting veterans to those jobs. Mr. Davis conceded that most of the available jobs are entry level and do not provide high wages, but many do have career potential for veterans willing to work.

Mr. Davis said that the Legislature can simplify the process by coordinating into one office a central source of information for all services offered by state agencies.

Mr. Garrett raised the issue of data sharing between state agencies in an effort to find and reach out to veterans who may not be aware of services available to them.

Dr. Rudd commented that he would be willing to initiate the organization of a higher education consortium to coordinate data about students who are veterans in the state.

Dr. Babitz reported a significant addition of four medicaid beds at the Veterans Administration Nursing Home. He also noted several instances of veterans who obtained certification as paramedics by passing the national written exam without being required to repeat course work.

Mr. Kelsey introduced himself and briefed task force members on the functions of the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health. Mr. Kelsey noted some of the training and certification programs provided through the division may meet critical needs of people returning from deployment.

Mr. Carruth distributed "Veterans Support Services at Institutions within the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE)" and gave an overview of some of the ways in which the institutions in the USHE are helping veterans to achieve their educational goals.

Dr. Rudd highlighted services provided to veterans at the University of Utah through the Veterans Support Center, the Vet Success on Campus program sponsored by the Veterans Administration, and the National Center for Veterans' Studies.

Ms. Darlene Head, Manager, Salt Lake Community College Veterans Center, distributed a letter dated July 31, 2012, and a pamphlet entitled "Salt Lake Community College Veterans' Center." Ms. Head discussed the development of the Veterans Center and the services currently available to veterans, and responded to task force members' questions.

Mr. Schwermer noted the positive role of the Utah Courts as a place for people to meet together and talk about issues. He also indicated that a discussion on the possible formation of Veterans Courts in Utah may be a viable topic for a future meeting.

3. Needs and Services: Subcommittee Formation Discussion

MOTION: Rep. Cosgrove moved that the Veterans Reintegration Task Force create two subcommittees to work on (1) military services and (2) state agency services available to veterans. The motion passed unanimously. Sen. Knudson and Mr. Shurtz were absent for the vote.

Chair Ray appointed LTC Baxter to head the subcommittee on military services and Mr. Schow to head the subcommittee on state agency services.

MOTION: Chair Ray moved to add as members of the task force a representative from the Utah College of Applied Technology (UCAT), and Todd Richardson, Davis County Sheriff.

Mr. Schow acknowledged the presence of Major General Jefferson S. Burton, Deputy Adjutant General, Utah National Guard.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION: Mr. Schow moved that the Veterans Reintegration Task Force include as members (1) Major Annette Barnes, Utah National Guard, (2) a representative from UCAT, and (3) Todd Richardson, Davis County Sheriff, as stated in Rep. Ray's original motion. The substitute motion passed unanimously. Sen. Knudson and Mr. Shurtz were absent for the vote.

Mr. North asked members of the task force to submit a summary list of needs and current agency provided services to their respective subcommittee chairs.

Mr. Garrett recommended Mike Bouwhis, President, Davis Applied Technology College, as a member of the task force.

Sen. Mayne recommended Rob Brems, President, UCAT, as a member of the task force.

Mr. Bob Jones, American Legion, spoke in support of having a central point of contact for information regarding all services available to veterans.

Chair Ray indicated that he has opened a bill file with the intention of making the Department of Veterans Affairs the central point of contact.

Mr. Bill Dunlap, American Legion, distributed "Who Are We" and spoke of the importance of education for and outreach to veterans.

LTC Baxter distributed "Veterans' Needs and Recommendations."

4. Other Items / Adjourn

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, September 5, 2012, at 9:00 a.m.

5. Adjourn

MOTION: Mr. Schow moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously. Sen. Knudson and Mr. Shurtz were absent for the vote.

Chair Ray adjourned the meeting at 11:31 a.m.