

Minutes

Senate Interim Committee on Children and Youth

House Interim Committee on

Aging, Children and Youth, Legislative and Military Affairs

Meeting Jointly

Wednesday, October 25, 2017

The Senate Interim Committee on Children and Youth and the House Interim Committee on Aging, Children and Youth, Legislative and Military Affairs met jointly on Wednesday, October 25, 2017, at 10:00 a.m., at the Arkansas State Veterans Home, 2401 John Ashley Drive, North Little Rock, Arkansas.

Committee members present: **Senators** Stephanie Flowers, Chair; Alan Clark, and Missy Irvin.

Representatives Charlene Fite, Chair; David Meeks, Vice Chair; LeAnne Burch, Bruce Coleman, Mickey Gates, Steve Hollowell, Clint Penzo, Danny Watson and Carlton Wing.

Non-committee members present: **Senator** Trent Garner. **Representatives** Fred Allen, Trevor Drown, Kenneth B. Ferguson, Kim Hammer, Douglas House and Fredrick J. Love.

Representative Fite called the meeting to order and recognized local legislators.

Representative Fite thanked Colonel Nathaniel Todd, Director, Arkansas Department of Veterans Affairs for hosting the meeting. Colonel Todd presented a PowerPoint presentation on the department's mission statement. He discussed the department's staffing, which is currently at 70 to 75 percent capacity, and its efforts in adding more staff to the facility. The North Little Rock facility ranks fourth across the nation in veterans dollars spent per capita as well as having one of the largest veterans populations per capita. The North Little Rock facility has a 96 bed capacity with a \$386 VA per diem and is VA certified. He described the distinction between private pay and Medicaid pay stating that, if veterans are financially not able to pay, they will most likely qualify for Medicaid.

There have been several eligibility fairs held across the state of Arkansas providing benefit information for veterans and their spouses. The historically marked Veterans Day event is scheduled for November 11, 2017, at MacArthur Museum with special keynote speaker Governor Asa Hutchinson. On March 29, 2018, a ceremony for the Vietnam 50th Anniversary Certificate and Pin Program will be held at the State Capitol honoring those who served during the Vietnam Era.

Colonel Todd also discussed the recommendation of replacing the Fayetteville facility and focusing some of their attention on the veterans in that facility. Some of those veterans suffer from mental

illness and require staff highly trained in dealing with those types of illnesses. He suggested that legislators begin to think about his recommendation for changes to that facility in the next three to four years. He also discussed the goals of providing more job training for the veterans of Arkansas as well as job placement and passing legislation for veterans/spouses who have already attained military credentials and/or license through years of service in their particular job related field so that their credentials are transferable to the state of Arkansas. (*see Handouts 1 and 2*)

With no further business the meeting adjourned at 11:03 a.m.

Upon adjournment committee members toured the new state of the art Veterans Home facility in North Little Rock.