

Minutes
Senate Committee on Children and Youth and the House Committee on
Aging, Children and Youth, Legislative and Military Affairs
Meeting Jointly
Friday, January 29, 2016

The Senate Committee on Children and Youth and the House Committee on Aging, Children and Youth, Legislative and Military Affairs met jointly on Friday, January 29, 2016, at 1:00 p.m., Office of the Adjutant General, Arkansas National Guard, Building 6000 in North Little Rock, Arkansas.

Committee members present: *Senators* **Stephanie** Flowers, Chair; Alan Clark, Missy Irvin, Bobby J. Pierce and Greg Standridge. *Representatives* George B. McGill, Chair; Mary Broadaway, Karilyn Brown, Vivian Flowers, Julie Mayberry, Marcus E. Richmond, Sue Scott and Brandt Smith.

Non-committee members present: *Senator* Jon Woods. *Representatives* Charles L. Armstrong, Jana Della Rosa, Jim Dotson, Kenneth B. Ferguson, James Sorvillo and Dwight Tosh.

Senator McGill called the meeting to order and recognized legislators.

Major General Mark H. Berry, Arkansas National Guard

Major General Berry welcomed both legislators, staff of the National Guard and everyone. A brief presentation was shown illustrating the mission statement of the Arkansas National Guard. One of the missions of the National Guard is to provide services to behaviorally challenged youth through the C-STEP Program and the Youth Challenge Program; which are funded by the federal and state government. These programs are designed to help youth become productive citizens.

Representative McGill recognized **Lieutenant Colonel Paul Jara, Emergency Manager, Joint Directorate of Military Support**. Colonel Jara presented a PowerPoint presentation on the State and Federal Mission of the Arkansas National Guard.

Senator Flowers asked, “how is Homeland Security issues handled”. Lieutenant Colonel Jara replied that the National Guard meets regularly with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Regional Office in Denton, Texas to address security issues. The Arkansas Guard works with FEMA, Arkansas Department of Emergency Management (ADEM) and the United States Northern Command (USNorthCom) with a primary focus to assist Arkansas in homeland security planning and to discuss federal resources. The National Guard works with agencies in the state of Arkansas such as; Fish and Wildlife, Civil Air Patrol and others to practice plans, should a homeland security issues arise. The Guard works closely with Director David Maxwell, ADEM, to practice drill exercises relating to homeland security.

Arkansas National Guard, Youth Challenge, Brigadier General Keith Klemmer. In Brigadier General Klemmer’s momentary absence Major General Berry introduced a brief presentation on the National Guard Youth Challenge Program and what the program offers at risk youth across the state of Arkansas. As of June 2014, over 130,000 students have graduated from the program nationwide. With an outcome of 75% of the youth receiving high school diplomas, General Education Diploma (GED), or returned to high school. The program operates at an annual cost of \$14,000 per enrollee, saving taxpayers over \$109 million in juvenile correctional cost and over \$31 million in ongoing educational

cost. The Youth Challenge post residential phase, plays a vital part in preparing youth with the necessary tools needed to enter back into society as productive citizens. This phase provides them with ongoing mentoring, job search assistance, training, job placement and scholarships. Due to funding restrictions 6 out of 10 applicants are turned away every year.

Major General Berry introduced Brigadier General Klemmer, who discussed both the C-Step and the Youth Challenge Program. He stated the C-Step program is funded out of general revenue and is a program for adjudicated youth referred to the program as an alternative to being placed in a juvenile detention center. This program has about 60 participants and is a 9 week program. The Youth Challenge Program is a 22 week program with 140 youth participating.

Brigadier General Klemmer introduced Mrs. Deborah Trammell, Director, Youth Challenge Program. She provided a presentation on the program and its statistics as well as discussing the three phases of the program. The first phase is the acclimation phase; which consist of the first two weeks of the program. The next 20 weeks of the program is the residential phase, and lastly the post residential phase. The criteria for the program is that the youth must be between the ages of 16 to 18 male or female (the program has a two to one male to female ratio), high school dropout, drug free, no felonies and mentally and physically able to complete the program.

Senator Flowers asked how the youth apply for the Youth Challenge Program. Mrs. Trammell stated that the program is a voluntary program and they apply through an online mentor application. It is recommended that each applicant have a mentor at the time of submission. The mentor is supposed to stick with them through the entire program. Senator Flowers asked if there are any monetary obligations paid by the students. Mrs. Trammell replied, no.

Senator Flowers recognized Mr. Marcus Devine, Director, Division of Youth Services (DYS). Mr. Devine stated that he supports both programs and noted the cost savings verses the services through **DYS. Senator Flowers asked that Mr. Devine provide a total of what has been expended this past fiscal year for commitments to DYS of status offenders.** Mr. Devine stated that he can provide that information to staff.

Representative Brown asked about the recruitment process for the mentors. Mrs. Trammell stated they are pulled from a pool of applicants and many are from the Pulaski County area; one of the challenges is attaining mentors from other areas within the state.

Update on the Arkansas Veterans Home Project at Fort Root, North Little Rock, Arkansas, Matt Snead, Director, Arkansas Department of Veterans Affairs (ADVA). Mr. Snead provided a handout which highlighted the project at Fort Root. He mentioned the agency is a 92 year old state agency with three missions. The first mission of the agency is the operation of two nursing homes; located in Fayetteville, Arkansas, and North Little Rock (currently under construction). The second mission is operating two cemetery's located in North Little Rock and Jonesboro, Arkansas. Lastly, the third mission is operating the Veterans Service Officer Network; responsible for connecting state and federal services to 250,000 Arkansas Veterans. He noted that this past year (2015), the Fayetteville Veterans Home net revenue was \$900,000 with the previous year (2014) a negative \$1 million. The Veterans Home receives no general revenue and all of the revenue that is received goes back into the home. The North Little Rock site will begin receiving veterans in October of 2016 and will continue to

admit in increments, to ensure Office of Long Term Care certification and Veteran Administration per diem eligibility.

Representative McGill invited members to tour the Youth Challenge facility located on the grounds.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:57 p.m.

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