

MINUTES
SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH
HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON AGING, CHILDREN AND YOUTH
LEGISLATIVE AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

Meeting Jointly
Thursday, June 12, 2014, 10:30 a.m.
Fayetteville Veterans Home
Fayetteville, Arkansas

The Senate Interim Committee on Children and Youth, and the House Interim Committee on Aging, Children and Youth, Legislative and Military Affairs, met on Thursday, June 12, 2014 at 10:30 a.m. at the Fayetteville Veterans Home in Fayetteville Arkansas.

Committee members present were: Senator Stephanie Flowers, Chair; Representatives David Meeks, Chair; Randy Alexander, John Baine, Sue Scott and Brent Talley.

Non-Committee members present were: Representatives Duncan Baird, Jim Dotson, Charlotte Douglas, Andrea Lea, Greg Leding, Stephen Meeks, and Mary L. Slinkard.

Representative D. Meeks called the meeting to order.

Representative Meeks introduced **Kriss Shaffer, Veterans Home, Director**. Before touring the facility Mr. Shaffer briefly described the Veterans Home and what it has to offer veterans and their families.

Overview of Issues and Concerns

After the tour Mr. Shaffer noted that the Veterans Home has 108 beds, 68 of which are currently filled. The low census is mainly because of the geographical location of the home; families desire to have their loved ones near them. There are however several pending referrals. Staff includes 8 RN(s), 26 LPN(s) and 47 CNA(s).

Mr. Shaffer stated the home is in the process of developing an Affiliation Agreement with UAMS and noted planned improvement projects. The facility is currently leased through UAMS. He also noted that they are working on a better marketing program for the home.

Representative Meeks recognized **Dr. Peter Kohler, Vice Chancellor, UAMS Northwest**. Dr. Kohler spoke briefly on the relationship between UAMS and the Veterans Home, and expressed his interest in both facilities building a great relationship. He noted that the Affiliation Agreement would create a great opportunity for UAMS students to learn by working at the Veterans Home.

Mr. Bob Schoenborn, Chairman, Arkansas Veterans Commission was recognized. Mr. Schoenborn briefly discussed the location selected for the new Veterans Home to be built in North Little Rock across from Fort Roots. He extended his appreciation for legislative support and legislation funding for the home. He stated that the ground breaking for the new home could be as early as February 2015.

Ms. Mary Erdman, Department of Commander, American Legion Department of Arkansas, veteran and a long time member of the Veterans Coalition mentioned a study that she did related to the availability of beds for veterans and provided some statistics on what is needed in Arkansas. Arkansas' veterans are underserved. She noted that some of

the younger veterans returning home will need more than just geriatric care but also care for traumatic brain injuries (TBI) as well as post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). She encouraged legislators to support measures to meet these needs and to make Arkansas a place for veterans to retire.

Representative Meeks stated the concerns are recognized by the committee and will be taken into consideration by the legislative body.

Ms. Karen Watkins, Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Arkansas Department of Veterans Affairs addressed some of the financial issues found at the Fayetteville Veterans Home since she became CFO in November, 2013. One major finding was that it was standard practice not to enter invoices into the state accounting system if there was no money to pay the bills. She provided the committee with a financial breakdown of outstanding debt and noted that she is working diligently to get existing issues resolved. The outstanding debt carried from 2013 totaled \$236,000. That debt will have to be resolved through the Arkansas State Claims Commission since the debt is over 45 days old.

Ms. Watkins noted that there has been an 18 percent decline in the number of patients since 2013 due mainly to negative reviews and as a result 2014 revenue is down. She stressed that the Veterans Home's current administration is working to correct all deficiencies noted.

Senator Flowers commended her on a job well done and stated that legislators will do what they can to help.

With no further business the meeting adjourned at 12:50 p.m.