

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE VETERANS, MILITARY AND HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Don Myers at 1:30 p.m, on January 22, 2009, in Room 711 of the Docking State Office Building.

All members were present except:

Representative Clay Aurand- excused
Representative Marti Crow- excused
Representative Pat George - excused

Committee staff present:

Barbara Lewerenz, Administrative Assistant
Corey Carnahan, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Chris Courtwright, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Art Griggs, Office of the Revisor of Statutes
Scott Wells, Office of the Revisor of Statutes

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Barbara Hinton, Legislative Post Auditor
Lisa Hoopes, Senior Audit Supervisor, Legislative Post Audit ([Attachment 1](#))
Wayne Bollig, Director of Veterans' Services, Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs

Others attending:

See attached list.

Moved by Representative Wolf, seconded by Representative Goyle for approval of Minutes of the House Committee on Veterans, Military and Homeland Security held January 20, 2009. Motion Carried.

Bills were introduced by Vice Chairman Goico and Chairman Myers pertaining to decals for veterans on duty more than 90 days in a combat zone and expansion of eligibility for "Gold Star Mother" license plates to the immediate family members of the deceased veteran. Motion Accepted by Chairman.

Chairman Myers introduced Conferee, Barbara Hinton, Legislative Post Auditor. The audit was requested by legislators to insure funds were being used appropriately for service to veterans. Copies of the *2008 Performance Audit Report of the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs* completed by the Legislative Post Audit Committee were available to Committee members. A copy of this report is on file at the at the State of Kansas, Legislative Division of Post Audit, 800 SW Jackson, Suite 1200, Topeka, Kansas 66612.

Senior Audit Supervisor, Lisa Hoopes was introduced and gave an overview of the audit findings addressing four basic questions:

Is Kansas doing a good job of ensuring that veterans are aware of services available through Federal programs? The audit recommendations were that the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs (KCVA) should periodically provide information to all state agencies and request that the agencies refer veterans in need of assistance to the KCVA. The KCVA executive director should work closely with veterans' service organizations to address and resolve significant issues.

Has the Commission on Veterans' Affairs held open a significant number of veteran representative positions? No audit recommendations were made. Most of these positions are being utilized by other state programs or grants. A new Enhanced Service Delivery Program will come from revenues generated by the veterans lottery scratch ticket beginning 2011. The KCVA will receive 30 percent of the revenues to fund vacant positions.

Has the Commission used all funds available to provide sufficient staff and service levels at the Kansas Soldiers' Home? Although inspections in July 2007 reported many deficiencies, the home has submitted plans of correction and is currently in good standing. Hiring practices have changed so that higher wages for nurses make it easier to hire qualified staff in this remote location. No audit recommendations were made.

CONTINUATION SHEET

Minutes of the House Veterans, Military And Homeland Security Committee at 1:30 p.m. On January 22, 2009, in Room 711 of the Docking State Office Building.

How much money is the KCVA spending to hold meetings at locations around Kansas? The Commission spent \$24,038 on 24 meetings and approximately one-half that amount was for meetings outside of Topeka. The audit recommendation was to consider alternative ways of meeting such as video conferencing or possibly fewer meetings.

Chairman Myers introduced Wayne Bollig, Director of Veterans' Services, KCVA, who held a question and answer session with the Committee regarding the audit findings, the current status of the KCVA and service to veterans. He explained the reason it often takes years for Federal benefits to process is the backlog in paper work and the appeals that are often necessary. Veterans are paid retroactively if benefits are approved. Outreach, which includes newsletters and referrals by Social and Rehabilitative Services and other agencies, is being done to reach veterans. There are still large numbers of veterans who have not filed claims that are potentially eligible for benefits especially in rural areas. The average number of residents at the Kansas Soldiers Home in Ft. Dodge, Kansas is 150. Some of the residents are spouses of veterans. The relationship between the KCVA and service organizations has greatly improved since Jack Fowler became Commissioner.

Chairman Myers introduced Darrell Bencken, Veterans' Claims Advisory Committee, Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Chairman Myers requested a meeting with the revisors to discuss the possibility of drafting a letter requesting that KCVA funds not be cut.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 27, 2009

The meeting was adjourned at 2:40 p. m