

MINUTES
STATE OF NEBRASKA COMMISSION ON MILITARY AND VETERAN AFFAIRS
301 Centennial Mall South, PO Box 95083, Lincoln, NE 68509-5083
August 9, 2024 - 1:00 p.m. - 301 Centennial Mall South, 4th Floor, NDVA

The Commission on Military and Veteran Affairs (Commission) met on August 9th, 2023, at 1:00 p.m. at the Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs (NDVA), 301 Centennial Mall South, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Commissioners present (voting members):

Major General Craig Strong, Adjutant General of the Nebraska National Guard
John Hilgert, Director, Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs
Dan Donovan, 2nd Congressional District
David Bloomfield, 3rd Congressional District

Commissioners present (nonvoting, ex officio members):

Brian Stoltenberg, Veterans' Program Coordinator, Nebraska Department of Labor
Rick Evans, Chair, State Committee Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve
Colonel Patrick Kolesiak 55th Wing Designee
Brigadier General Michael Liesman, U.S. Strategic Command Designee
Colonel Matthew Sattler, 557th Weather Wing Designee

Commissioners excused (voting member):

K.C. Belitz, Director, Nebraska Department of Economic Development
Tami Thompson, 1st Congressional District

Commissioner representative present (nonvoting):

Colby Angst, representing the Nebraska Department of Economic Development

I. CALL TO ORDER – LOCATION OF THE OPEN MEETINGS ACT

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. and the location of the Open Meetings Act in the room was identified by Robert Ford, Military Affairs Liaison.

II. ROLL CALL

Strong, Hilgert, Donovan, Bloomfield, Stoltenberg, Evans, Kolesiak, Liesman, and Sattler were present. Additionally, Colby Angst was present representing the Nebraska Department of Economic Development in a nonvoting status.

III. APPROVAL OF November 3, 2023, COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Moved by Bloomfield and seconded by Donovan to approve the November 3, 2023, Commission meeting minutes. Voting Aye: Strong, Hilgert, Donovan, and Bloomfield. Motion carried.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

CSM (ret) Richard Burch, Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army (CASA), addressed the Commission to introduced himself and explain the role of the CASA. He expressed a desire to work together for the benefit of all Army soldiers in Nebraska.

V. MILITARY INSTALLATION DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT UPDATE – Nebraska Department of Veterans’ Affairs

Jessica Forch, NDVA Agency Legal Counsel, presented an update regarding the Military Installation Development and Support Fund (MISDF) describing the changes in administration and implementation of the MISDF following approval of LB 1413. LB 1413 changed the name from “Military Base” to “Military Installation” Development and Support Fund.

The application remains available on the NDVA web site. As of the date of the meeting, NDVA received one completed application. That application is under review and should be completed in the next week.

Several other entities have expressed interest and NDAV hopes to receive more applications soon. Evans and COL Kolesiak commented they are working projects for Offutt AFB and appreciated the LB 1413 changes.

Hilgert recognized the great work of the NDVA legal team in supporting applicants preparing nominations. He reiterated that the NDVA team remains available as a resource when preparing applications.

VI. OFFUTT/AAFES RESOURCE CENTER UPDATE – Hilgert

Hilgert provided updates regarding the placement of the Nebraska Resource Center in the AAFES shopping center on Offutt AFB. NDVA has trained and accredited staff identified and are preparing for a “soft opening”. He recognized to great support of the Omaha Chamber of Commerce, University of Nebraska, and Nebraska Veterans of Foreign Wars getting the facility opened and expressed the hope to be fully operation before the Offutt Air Show. It is believed this is the only service center in an AAFES mall in the U.S. The service center intends to support a broad range of questions and issues for veterans living in Nebraska. Randy Norwood, Omaha Chamber, highlighted the ability of the service center to support military spouse employment opportunities. The commission discussed ways to advertise the center on STRATCOM and across the base as well as ideas for a ribbon cutting ceremony.

VII. DEFENSE STATE LIAISON OFFICE (DSLO) UPDATE – Ford

Ford provided an update on the status of the 2024 Defense State Liaison Office (DSLO) legislative priorities. The DSLO liaison evaluated Nebraska as complete on four of the ten 2024 priorities (Defining Armed Forces in State Policy, Open Enrollment Flexibility, Military Community Representation on State Boards and Councils, and Concurrent Juvenile Jurisdiction). Three priorities are partially met (Military Spouse Employment and Economic Opportunities, Child Abuse Identification and Reporting, and State Response to Military Interpersonal Violence) and the remaining three are new legislative initiatives (Military Access to Quality Family Child Care, Military Family Anti-Discrimination Status, and State Support for Military Families with Special Education Needs). The commission took special notice of the ability of landlords to require service

members to waive their Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) protections. Hilgert informed the commissioners the NDVA will discuss these priorities with the policy research office staff. It was decided that the commission will conduct further research of SCRA protections in Nebraska and Ford will ensure it is on the next meeting's agenda for update. Concerning the 2025 DSLO priorities, Nebraska currently meets the only new 2025 priority (Remote vehicle registration and licensing). COL Kolesiak noted that Offutt AFB provided a letter of support for previous legislation and suggested future non-partisan legislation may also garner installation support.

VIII. MISSOURI/KANSAS NATIONAL SECURITY CROSSROADS STUDY – Ford

Ford provided information on a study conducted at the 55th Wing by the Matrix group on behalf of the Missouri/Kansas National Security Crossroads (NSC) organization. The NSC's mission is to, "brand the Kansas Missouri region as a National Security strength and home for national security missions, educate the region on the value of the Crossroads, and share best practices to enable members of the Crossroads to be agile and resilient." The Wing reported that none of the questions were not already public knowledge. The Matrix group has stated that the Commission will have the opportunity to review the study prior to publication. Ford will continue to communicate with his counterparts in Kansas and Missouri and will provide the draft study when received.

IX. COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT AS REQUIRED BY NEB. REV. STAT. §55-602, RECOMMENDATIONS, COURSES OF ACTION

Dr. Eric Thompson and Dr. Mitch Herian from the University of Nebraska's Bureau of Business Research (BBR) presented options for the 2023 update to the Economic Impact of Nebraska Military Assets. Herian highlighted two options. Option one was a limited study focused only on the areas necessary to complete the economic impact study. Option two, includes the ability to conduct special studies of Nebraska veteran satisfaction and knowledge of the state's veteran resources. There was discussion of concerns that a meaningful special study survey could be developed and conducted before the November statutory deadline. Incorporating a "digital ethnographic" study methodology was suggested to shorten the development time. The commission asked Ford to explore a contract that identified multiple delivery dates for each product to allow adequate time for survey development while still meeting the November economic impact study deadline.

X. DISCUSSION ON CONTRACT WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA BUREAU OF BUSINESS RESEARCH FOR "ECONOMIC IMPACT OF NEBRASKA MILITARY ASSETS: UPDATE FOR FY 2023" PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF NEB. REV. STAT. §55-605 and §55-606

After discussion concerning the two potential options presented by BBR, Bloomfield moved to approve option two of the proposal which included three tasks, estimate the economic impact of all federal and state military assets in Nebraska, assess the impact of military veteran and retiree spending in the state, and conduct a programs and services satisfaction survey of Nebraska veterans. The motion was seconded by Hilgert. Voting Aye: Strong, Hilgert, Donovan, and Bloomfield. Motion carried.

XI. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Each Commissioner present was given the opportunity to make comments.

XII. MOTION TO ADJOURN – Action/Vote

Moved by Bloomfield and seconded by Donovan to adjourn. Voting Aye: Bohac, Hilgert, Donovan, and Bloomfield. Motion carried. Adjourned at 2:45 p.m.