

MINUTES  
STATE OF NEBRASKA COMMISSION ON MILITARY AND VETERAN AFFAIRS  
301 Centennial Mall South, PO Box 95083, Lincoln, NE 68509-5083

Friday, November 6, 2020 - 10:00 a.m.  
301 Centennial Mall South, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, NDVA

The Commission on Military and Veteran Affairs (Commission) met on November 6, 2020 at 1:30 p.m. in the Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs (NDVA), 301 Centennial Mall South, Lincoln, Nebraska.

In compliance with the provisions of *Neb. Rev. Stat. §84-1411*, printed notice of this meeting was posted at NDVA. In addition, the notice was published in the Omaha World Herald on page 6C on October 16, 2020, and posted to the Nebraska Public Meeting Calendar (nebraska.gov) on October 2, 2020.

In compliance with the provisions of *Neb. Rev. Stat. §55-602 and §55-603*, a quorum was established with five of six voting members present. A written notice of the time and place of the meeting was mailed to all members in advance of the meeting. The aim of these minutes is to comply with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act, specifically *Neb. Rev. Stat. §84-1413*.

Commissioners present (voting members):

Major General Daryl Bohac, Adjutant General of the Nebraska National Guard  
John Hilgert, Director, Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs  
Tami Thompson, 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District  
Dan Donovan, 2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District  
Dave Bloomfield, 3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District

Commissioners present (nonvoting, ex officio members):

Mark McDonald, Veterans' Program Coordinator, Nebraska Department of Labor  
Mike Navrkal, Chair, State Committee Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve  
Nikki Nader, 55<sup>th</sup> Wing Designee  
Major General Bob Stevenson, U.S. Strategic Command Designee  
Colonel Steven Vilpors, 557<sup>th</sup> Weather Wing Designee

Commissioners excused (voting member):

Anthony Goins, Director, Nebraska Department of Economic Development

Commissioners excused (nonvoting, ex officio members):

None

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. by Phil O'Donnell, Military Affairs Liaison.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Bohac, Hilgert, Thompson, Donovan, Bloomfield, McDonald, Navrkal, Nader, Stevenson, and Vilpors were present. Goins was excused.

As of: 6/8/2021

**III. ENTRY OF PUBLIC NOTICE INTO THE RECORD IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE OPEN MEETINGS ACT, SPECIFICALLY *Neb. Rev. Stat. §84-1411*. ADVISE THE PUBLIC THAT THE OPEN MEETINGS ACT APPLIES AND IS PUBLICALLY POSTED PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF *Neb. Rev. Stat. §84-1412*.**

Military Affairs Liaison, Phil O'Donnell, announced the location of the Open Meetings Act on the wall of the NDVA training room. O'Donnell also noted the public notice of the meeting was posted in the Omaha World Herald (page 6C) on October 16, 2020, and posted to the Nebraska Public Meeting Calendar ([nebraska.gov](http://nebraska.gov)) on October 2, 2020.

**IV. MOTION TO DESIGNATE ENTRY OF PUBLIC NOTICE FOR THE NEXT MEETING OF THE COMMISSION ON MILITARY AND VETERAN AFFAIRS IN THE OMAHA WORLD HERALD AND ON THE NEBRASKA.GOV CALENDAR PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF *Neb. Rev. Stat. §84-1411* – Action/Vote**

Moved by Bohac and seconded by Bloomfield to designate entry of public notice in the Omaha World Herald and the Nebraska Public Meeting Calendar on [nebraska.gov](http://nebraska.gov). Voting Aye: Bohac, Hilgert, Thompson, Donovan, Bloomfield. Motion carried.

**V. APPROVAL OF JULY 24, 2020 COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES – Action/Vote**

O'Donnell thanked Kelly Ostrander for her support in the preparation of the minutes.

Moved by Hilgert and seconded by Bloomfield to approve the July 24, 2020 Commission meeting minutes. Voting Aye: Bohac, Hilgert, Thompson, Donovan, Bloomfield. Motion carried.

**VI. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD – July 24, 2020**

*In accordance with provisions of Neb. Rev. Stat. §84-1412, the public shall have the right to attend meetings of the Commission and to speak on matters related to Commission business. Any person may appear before and address the Commission concerning any item on the agenda for that meeting. Further, any person may appear before and address the Commission at an annual or scheduled meeting on any matter concerning the Commission not on the agenda by notifying the Commission Secretary in advance of the meeting at which the person desires to address the Commission. A reasonable time limit [usually five (5) minutes] shall be placed upon each individual appearance before the Board, and no more than thirty (30) minutes shall be allowed for public comment, unless a majority of the quorum present shall extend such time limit. The Chairperson shall have the right to prohibit appearances by persons presenting needlessly repetitious or redundant testimony.*

Dean Kenkel, co-founder of the Nebraska Veterans Coalition (NVC), described the current organization and structure of the NVC which includes 4,500 Facebook members and over 2,000 email recipients. The NVC staff has expanded to 8 dedicated volunteers and continues to advocate for creating a Home Base Nebraska program similar to Home Base Iowa. The NVC has created a Home Base packet to entice veterans to make Nebraska their home. Kenkel described the history

of Home Base Iowa dating back to 2014 which included Iowa's 100% exemption of military retirement pay from Iowa taxation. Kenkel noted his participation in a Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) virtual conference with Dan Donovan. Kenkel applauded Donovan's presentation regarding the passage of LB 153.

Donovan noted that persistence was the key to the passage of LB 153. Additionally, Donovan commended the Commission and the hard data available in the Commission's report to shape the decision of the Revenue Committee.

Hilgert asked Kenkel to clarify the content of the NVC's proposal.

Kenkel explained that the NVC proposal is basically what the Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs (NDVA) has in its "Welcome Home" packet.

Hilgert agreed that NDVA could confirm the accuracy of information in the NVC packet.

Ron Dupell, Chief Master Sergeant United States Air Force (Retired), introduced himself and noted that Dean Kenkel neglected to say he is a Chief Warrant Officer 5 United States Army (Retired). Dupell noted that the Commission's support of LB 153 was very important and hoped that the Commission would continue to review and support future legislation. Dupell noted that the NVC intends to assist Senator Brewer and the Governor in getting 100% of military retirement pay exempted (from State of Nebraska taxation). Additionally, the NVC intends on finding a way to reduce the cost of registering a vehicle in Nebraska. Dupell described a goal of creating a 20% discount on motor vehicle taxes for all veterans and his process for finding a legislative sponsor. Dupell noted the decrease in Nebraska's veteran population from 144,000 to 124,000. Finally, Dupell discussed NVC efforts to establish a Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) treatment program similar to Massachusetts General Hospital's PTSD's treatment program. Dupell intends to contact the Chairman of the Nebraska Medical Center's Mental Health Program to improve the organization of Nebraska PTSD programs. The NVC intends to brief and share their plans with the Nebraska Veterans Council on November 16.

Hilgert encouraged Dupell to share any cost estimates regarding the NVC legislative initiatives which could then be shared with the Governor's Policy Research Office. Hilgert described the executive branch budget process and noted how Governor Ricketts' first budget included money for the exemption of military retirement pay from State income taxation.

Dupell noted that the NVC had additional research to do with the Nebraska Department of Motor Vehicles.

Bloomfield asked if the NVC had considered looking at a percentage-based income tax reduction for all veterans.

Dupell stated that the NVC's first priority is to support Senator Brewer and the Governor to get 100% exemption of military retirement pay from state income taxation.

Bloomfield noted that a percentage-based income tax reduction for all veterans would probably be simpler than working through the Department of Motor Vehicles. Bloomfield noted that a number of Senators could potentially support a percentage-based income tax reduction for veterans.

Hilgert noted that some people think that all veterans are retired and acknowledged that a subset of the veteran population benefits from LB 153.

Dupell stated that Nebraska would be well served to make efforts to attract and retain servicemembers leaving the United States Air Force and the Nebraska National Guard.

Kenkel stated that the NVC is conducting research on bills that “died in committee” from 2015 until now. Kenkel noted that there are a lot of bills that did not have large fiscal notes which may be of some benefit.

O’Donnell asked if any other members of public would like to speak before moving forward on the agenda.

## **VII. DELIBERATION – COMMISSION REPORT, RECOMMENDATIONS, COURSES OF ACTION**

*Neb. Rev. Stat. §55-606. Report; contents.*

*The Commission on Military and Veteran Affairs shall prepare an annual report summarizing the military assets of Nebraska, including installations and missions, and the economic impact of the military assets in Nebraska. The report shall also include recommendations for preserving and sustaining military assets and missions existing in Nebraska and recommendations for actions which the state can take to encourage expanding such assets and missions. The commission shall submit the report electronically to the Legislature, the Governor, and the commanding officer of every military base in Nebraska on or before November 15 of each year.*

O’Donnell introduced Dr. Eric Thompson and Dr. Mitch Herian from the University of Nebraska’s Bureau of Business Research.

Thompson presented an overview of the report and then focused his comments on the economic impact portion of the report. Thompson described the inputs related to direct economic activity and the methodology of including a multiplier impact or “spill over activity” on the economy.

Thompson described the following economic impact estimates:

- Spending at military bases and installations in FY 2019 accounted for \$2.34 billion in economic output, \$1.32 billion in employee compensation, and 24,827 jobs generated in Nebraska. These numbers are largely consistent with analyses conducted for FY 2018.
- Retirement and pension spending by Department of Defense (DoD) military retirees in Nebraska in FY 2019 generated 2,628 new jobs in Nebraska (in addition to the 24,827 noted above), resulting in \$120.0 million in compensation to these employees. These numbers are similar to FY 2017 and 2018 economic impact estimates.
- Estimates show that VA spending in FY 2019 resulted in \$1.94 billion in economic output and the employment of 14,006 workers with a total salary of \$744.3 million. The economic output numbers and employment numbers are considerably higher than estimates produced for FY 2017 and FY 2018.
- Army Corps of Engineers spending in FY 2019 resulted in \$156.7 million in economic output, 1,459 jobs, and \$94.4 million in employee compensation. These estimates are

slightly lower than estimates produced for FY 2018.

- GI Bill spending in the state in FY 2019 resulted in 381 jobs, \$17.1 million in salary, and \$40.2 million in economic output. These numbers are down slightly from estimates computed in the FY 2018 report.

O'Donnell asked if there were any questions for Dr. Thompson.

Bohac noted that the 4,408 Nebraska National Guard members are a mixture of full-time and part-time employees. Bohac asked if the type of employment mattered in calculating the economic impact.

Thompson described how the multiplier impact is typically driven off of spending and income. Thompson understood the point that including part-time and full-time jobs together may appear as an “apples and oranges” scenario; however, the multiplier impact is tied to income as a component of total spending. Whether or not the income is derived from full-time or part-time work would not impact the multiplier. Thompson acknowledged that he implicitly imagined that the reader would understand that National Guard and Reserve jobs would be comprised of both full-time and part-time employment.

O'Donnell introduced Dr. Herian to present the special studies.

Herian thanked the Commission for the opportunity to continue this important research. Herian described three special studies. The first was an examination of resources available for veterans interested in starting small businesses. The UNL-BBR team did a systematic search of websites from all 50 states and summarized their findings in a table. The research team noted that Wisconsin provides a lot of different resources online. The State of Texas had a Veterans Entrepreneur's Program where veterans could connect with mentors who have started small businesses. Herian highlighted the Nebraska Business Development Center's proprietary software called Source Link which links individuals who are entrepreneurial with the various resources that exist in the state.

Herian described a special study focused on best practices of Nebraska businesses for hiring veterans. The research team conducted semi-structured interviews with Nebraska businesses. Of note, Valmont described their process for hiring veterans through a Human Resource Association of the Midlands (HRAM) job fair and other job fairs. Additionally, Duncan Aviation specifically recruits veterans and has leveraged the DoD's SkillBridge Program. This program allows active duty service members within 180 days of separating from the service to “intern” or receive training from the industry partner (an employer). There is no cost to the employer given that the DoD continues to pay the service member while they participate in the program. While there is no requirement for the business to offer a job to the transitioning service member, Duncan Aviation has hired a number of people through the program. Transitioning service members have also been able to use their GI Bill benefits for some of the training at Duncan Aviation. Herian noted that the research team still had a number of unanswered invitations which would help improve the response rate.

Herian described the third special study which developed a methodology for conducting supply chain analysis. The research team examined reports from Wisconsin and Missouri which stood out for their approaches. The aim would be to identify which Nebraska businesses work with the DoD, which industries these businesses are clustered to, and then identify any advantages or gaps.

Herian envisioned both a short-term study and a longer-term effort. To start, a short-term study could include an analysis of all federal contracts through the federal data procurement system. A research team could identify the relevant DoD organizations that are doing business with companies in Nebraska, assess the volume of business, and identify product service codes to figure out what industries are involved. For a longer-term study, a research team could follow the Missouri model and take a qualitative approach to determine their industry strengths and weaknesses.

Donovan noted that Union Pacific and Werner Trucking could be two additional companies to reach out to given their strong history of hiring veterans.

Herian agreed and would follow up with both companies.

Navrkal offered the ESGR network of contacts with HR departments in businesses across the State.

Herian thanked Navrkal for his support.

A member of the public asked if businesses were aware of the SkillBridge program. The member of the public also asked how SkillBridge was being implemented on Offutt Air Force Base (AFB). The member of the public described her experience with TAP classes online.

O'Donnell agreed that it would be worthwhile to explore further and offered that Mark McDonald may be able to offer some thoughts when he speaks.

Bohac noticed in the report that capital construction costs were not included and that they probably should be included (specifically capital construction cost summary) with the general fund appropriations by the State in support of the Nebraska National Guard. Bohac added that the Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs had capital construction that should be included in the report as well.

Thompson welcomed the additional data and agreed to recalculate the appropriate economic impact.

O'Donnell interjected and noted that internal State of Nebraska expenditures have not historically been accounted for in the Commission report as part of the overall economic impact.

Thompson asked if Maj Gen Bohac was referring to federal resources.

Bohac explained that the report did not reflect capital construction costs that had both state and federal cost share.

Thompson confirmed that the impact analysis focused on the federal spending. Thompson confirmed that the team would endeavor to include the federal share of capital construction for the economic impact analysis.

Bohac agreed.

O'Donnell noted that federal VA construction was one of the categories.

Hilgert affirmed that construction is comprised of federal dollars.

O'Donnell clarified that we have not included any State funding for State VA facilities.

Thompson acknowledged that we have not.

O'Donnell presented Senator Crawford's "progress on military and veterans issues" and described how the Commission report reflected these bills. O'Donnell noted an intention to include a brief paragraph on the Nebraska Transformational Project or NExT project and cite various press releases. O'Donnell noted the lag between when funds are appropriated, spent, and then reported as being spent for the purposes of economic analysis. O'Donnell offered that it may make sense to add a section regarding the latest federal appropriations as an update on the latest National Defense Authorization Act. O'Donnell thanked Val Nickel with the Nebraska National Guard, 55<sup>th</sup> Wing, 557<sup>th</sup> Weather Wing, and U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) for their support.

Vilpors asked whether or not we should link the revenue decrease associated with the passage of LB 153 with the positive economic impact associated with attracting and retaining military retirees to the State.

Hilgert explained how the Legislative Fiscal Office prepares Fiscal Notes solely from a state budget perspective. Hilgert agreed with Vilpors' point that the Fiscal Note does not reflect the full economic impact.

O'Donnell noted that it is important to recognize that the fiscal note is static while the Commission's economic analysis is dynamic.

Hilgert offered that there may be an opportunity to move toward more dynamic analysis and noted his experience in the Legislature.

Bloomfield acknowledged that while the Fiscal Note is very necessary, it is not always realistic.

O'Donnell asked if there were any other questions and stated that the intention was to continue to refine and improve upon the report.

Hilgert thanked the University of Nebraska and is pleased with our relationship.

**VIII. MOTION TO AMEND AND SUBMIT THE COMMISSION REPORT  
PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF *Neb. Rev. Stat. §55-606* – Action/Vote**

Moved by Bohac and seconded by Hilgert to amend and submit the Economic Impact of Nebraska Military Assets: Update for FY2019 pursuant to *Neb. Rev. Stat. §55-606*. Voting Aye: Bohac, Hilgert, Thompson, Donovan, Bloomfield. Motion carried.

**IX. VETERANS' PROGRAM COORDINATOR REPORT PURSUANT TO THE  
PROVISIONS OF *Neb. Rev. Stat. §48-203* – MARK MCDONALD**

*Mark McDonald, the Veterans' Program Coordinator for the Nebraska Department of Labor, provided a progress report to the Commission on Military and Veteran Affairs pursuant to the*

*provisions of Neb. Rev. Stat. §48-203.*

O'Donnell introduced Mark McDonald, Veterans' Program Coordinator at the Nebraska Department of Labor. O'Donnell noted the requirement for the Veterans' Program Coordinator to provide a progress report to the Commission on Military and Veteran Affairs pursuant to the provisions of Neb. Rev. Stat. §48-203.

McDonald described the initial steps he took upon starting the position in late February (2020). McDonald focused on team building and managing the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist and Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) staff assigned to him through the federal Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) program. McDonald implemented annual training on veteran priority of service and looked forward to expanding training for his DVOP and LVER personnel. McDonald additionally focused veteran related training throughout the Nebraska Department of Labor (NDOL). Specifically, McDonald added a "veteran box" to intake paperwork for NDOL's rapid response unit to ensure veterans who were impacted by a closure or dislocation were served. McDonald was able to raise awareness not only within NDOL but also within the human resources departments in companies. On April 6<sup>th</sup>, McDonald and all of his JVSG team were reassigned to process unemployment insurance (UI) claims due to COVID-19. McDonald was proud of the State of Nebraska for staying open and processing UI claims. On June 15<sup>th</sup>, McDonald and the JVSG team returned to normal duties focused on veterans. One positive change is how all veteran calls or claims are now immediately channeled to the JVSG team. To date, the JVSG team has helped over 200 veterans since June 15<sup>th</sup>. McDonald described his team's role in over 100 hiring events across the State. McDonald noted a refresh and review of dated website links and a growing awareness of the DoD's SkillBridge program. McDonald described professional development efforts through the National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI). McDonald described outreach through the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) on Offutt AFB. NDOL contact information is still available to the TAP attendees and McDonald expects NDOL personnel to restart presentations in January 2021. In August, NDOL partnered with NDVA to ensure veterans employment services are part of NDVA's welcome home packet. Additionally, NDOL is sharing information with the Nebraska Veterans Coalition on social media. In September, McDonald presented information at the County Veterans Service Officer (CVSO) bi-annual training and thanked Levi Bennett for facilitating this training in Kearney. McDonald intends to update an MOU with the federal Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) program. McDonald discussed the development of the Nebraska Veteran and Family Task Force's use of "Basecamp" where NDOL has been able to post hiring events and activities. McDonald has asked all of his JVSG team to participate in the virtual Nebraska Veteran and Family Task Force meetings. McDonald noted a stand down in Norfolk scheduled for November 13 to address employment impacts in Sioux City. McDonald described how NDOL's registered apprenticeship program is currently working with 28 employers. Finally, McDonald described updates to tracking measures and performance goals. Given the challenges of 2020, McDonald believes his team adapted, performed, and kept its focus on veterans.

Bloomfield asked about the stand down in Norfolk.

McDonald described how the Veterans Service Officer and local DVOP were focusing a standdown for homeless veterans.

Hilgert asked that the information be shared with the recognized veterans service organizations.



Kenkel asked McDonald if this information would be on an NDOL website. Kenkel invited McDonald or the NDOL staff to post the information on the Nebraska Veterans Coalition social media sites.

McDonald noted that he had hoped that the information was already distributed and posted through Basecamp and the Nebraska Veterans and Family Task Force. McDonald acknowledged that his team may have missed other communication channels.

Nader stated that COVID has been very tough on Offutt AFB personnel, especially those projected to retire or separate. Nader described how some service members have asked to postpone their retirement or separation date given perceived unemployment across the nation. Nader described how before COVID, NDOL presentations were always well received by the TAP participants (as documented in surveys). Nader acknowledged that the link between NDOL and the Airman and Family Readiness Center may have weakened a bit through the fog and friction of COVID (ie: the tasking of the NDOL team to UI claims). Nader noted that there could be improved communication regarding hiring fairs. Nader offered that there could be additional opportunities for NDOL to partner with the Airman and Family Readiness Center (through the 55<sup>th</sup> Force Support Squadron). Nader noted that this could help address increased transition related anxiety due to COVID.

O'Donnell noted that in addition to the employment resources, we would want to make sure we share the spouse occupational licensure reforms as well.

McDonald and Nader agreed.

## **X. U.S. SPACE COMMAND BASING NOMINATION – Military Affairs Liaison**

*Phil O'Donnell, Military Affairs Liaison for the Commission on Military and Veteran Affairs, provided an update regarding the City of Bellevue's self-nomination to host the permanent headquarters of the United States Space Command.*

O'Donnell described how the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Installations, Environment, and Energy (SAF/IE) reached out to the nation's Governors in May and encouraged communities to compete for the permanent headquarters of the U.S. Space Command. O'Donnell noted that during the July 24<sup>th</sup> Commission meeting O'Donnell discussed the City of Bellevue's request to be a part of that competition and how the City of Bellevue met the minimum requirements. On the afternoon of July 24<sup>th</sup>, the Department of the Air Force notified O'Donnell that the City of Bellevue had met the minimum requirements and provided a questionnaire to complete. O'Donnell shared a copy of the completed questionnaire along with an illustrative briefing requested by SAF/IE specific to the proposed site with the Commission. O'Donnell thanked Mrs. Nikki Nader and Mr. Jeff Mikesell along with others who were actively engaged in preparing the evaluation phase questionnaire. Through the course of the basing nomination process, the Department of the Air Force released its "Support of Military Families" assessment. O'Donnell presented copies of both the initial and revised "Support of Military Families" assessments for Offutt AFB. O'Donnell also presented the assessments for Peterson AFB, the current home of U.S. Space Command, and proxies for Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville Alabama (as an Army installation it was not evaluated by the Air Force's "Support of Military Families" effort).

O'Donnell described the next anticipated steps in the strategic basing process, specifically a cut to another round with site surveys to be announced after the election.

Hilgert asked how many locations would make the next cut.

O'Donnell offered that there was no firm answer to that question and then explained what was known about the scoring process. The Air Force had indicated that there would be “bend in the knee” so the number of finalists would probably range from 1 to 10 or 12.

Nader indicated that the next step probably wouldn't happen until the first of the year. Nader described how the 55<sup>th</sup> Wing also received a questionnaire for the evaluation phase about a week and a half after the community received its evaluation phase questionnaires. The installation questionnaire during the evaluation phase focused on different services and capacities on Offutt AFB. Examples included the capacity of child development centers, military housing, dining facilities, space, etc. Nader expressed optimism given that the process illustrated no negative issues which affirmed Offutt AFB's ability to host the permanent headquarters of U.S. Space Command with very little military construction (MILCON).

O'Donnell noted that he learned more about the super-computing capabilities of the 557<sup>th</sup> Weather Wing, along with the associated bandwidth on base given the proposed location. Arguably, the communications capabilities would be very important for the permanent headquarters of U.S. Space Command.

Vilpors noted that the 557<sup>th</sup> Weather Wing provided information to the 55<sup>th</sup> Wing and is pleased to support the effort.

Bloomfield stated that the evaluation phase questionnaire was well done and wanted to thank whoever played a role. Bloomfield stated that after reading the evaluation phase questionnaire he was ready to vote for Bellevue.

O'Donnell noted the team effort of a number of stakeholders including the City of Bellevue, the Omaha Chamber, and others.

### **Col Vilpors – 557<sup>th</sup> Weather Wing Designee**

Vilpors thanked the Commission for the opportunity to contribute and appreciates the State's support to the 557<sup>th</sup> Weather Wing. Vilpors noted that a number of State initiatives would be well received.

### **Maj Gen Stevenson – U.S. Strategic Command Designee**

Stevenson updated the Commission on USSTRATCOM's response to COVID and thanked the 55<sup>th</sup> Wing, the University of Nebraska Medical Center, and State of Nebraska Public Health teams' support to USSTRATCOM. Stevenson commended all parties for their support to Offutt AFB and the U.S. Strategic Command.

### **Mrs. Nicki Nader – 55<sup>th</sup> Wing Designee**

Nader, on behalf of Colonel Marks and Colonel Dayton, thanked the Commission for its unwavering support to the 55<sup>th</sup> Wing. Nader anticipates increased economic impact at Offutt AFB due to a number of post-flood construction projects and runway repairs coming to fruition.

**Mike Navrkal – State Committee Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve**

Navrkal highlighted Children’s Hospital in Omaha as one of fifteen, Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award winners for 2020. The Freedom Award is the highest recognition given to employers for their support of employees who serve in the National Guard and Reserve components. Navrkal described ESGR’s pivot to virtual employer and military outreach due to COVID. Navrkal continues to see great effort from employers in Nebraska to support Reserve component members.

**Mark McDonald – Veterans Program Coordinator - Nebraska Department of Labor**

McDonald thanked the Commission and welcomes any feedback.

**Dan Donovan – 2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District**

Donovan thanked O’Donnell for his work on the U.S. Space Command application.

**Maj Gen Bohac – Adjutant General Nebraska National Guard**

Bohac was excused.

**Tami Thompson – 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District**

Thompson thanked Dr. Herian and Dr. Thompson for their work on the Commission report and thought it was very well done.

**Dave Bloomfield – 3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District**

Bloomfield acknowledged the passage of LB 153, an exemption of 50% of military retirement pay from State income taxation. Bloomfield offered that the Nebraska Veterans Coalition should consider advocating for legislation that impacts veterans who are not necessarily military retirees.

**John Hilgert, Director, Nebraska Department of Veterans Affairs**

Hilgert offered that he is always available to share resources and knowledge in support of Nebraska’s veterans.

O’Donnell thanked Charlene Sheltraw for her support to the Commission. O’Donnell thanked the Commissioners for their time and insight.

**XI. MOTION TO ADJOURN – Action/Vote**

Moved by Thompson and seconded by Donovan to adjourn. Voting Aye: Hilgert, Thompson, Donovan, Bloomfield. Motion carried. 3:10 p.m.