

MINUTES

STATE OF NEBRASKA COMMISSION ON MILITARY AND VETERAN AFFAIRS
301 Centennial Mall South, PO Box 95083, Lincoln, NE 68509-5083
November 10, 2021 - 1:00 p.m. - 301 Centennial Mall South, 4th Floor, NDVA

The Commission on Military and Veteran Affairs (Commission) met on November 10, 2021 at 1:00 p.m. in the Nebraska Department of Veterans’ Affairs (NDVA), 301 Centennial Mall South, Lincoln, Nebraska.

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, 1st Congressional District
Dan Donovan, 2nd Congressional District

Commissioners present (nonvoting, ex officio members):

Joshua Whited, Veterans’ Program Coordinator, Nebraska Department of Labor
Rick Evans, Chair, State Committee Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve
Nikki Nader, 55th Wing Designee
Major General Bob Stevenson, U.S. Strategic Command Designee
Colonel John Roberts, 557th Weather Wing Designee

Commissioners excused (voting member):

Anthony Goins, Director, Nebraska Department of Economic Development
(Nichole Reiner represented NDED in a nonvoting status)
Dave Bloomfield, 3rd Congressional District

Commissioners excused (nonvoting, ex officio members):

None

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Phil O’Donnell, Military Affairs Liaison.

II. ROLL CALL

Bohac, Hilgert, Thompson, Donovan, Whited, Evans, Nader, Stevenson, and Roberts were present. Goins and Bloomfield were excused.

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 at the offices of the NDVA in the State Office Building, published in the Omaha World

Herald (page B7) on November 2, 2021 and posted to the Nebraska Public Meeting Calendar (nebraska.gov) on September 30, 2021.

O'Donnell noted a review of the Open Meetings Act by the Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs Legal Counsel revealed that the Commission is not required to place a public meeting notice in a newspaper of record (such as the Omaha World Herald). Thus, agenda item IV, a motion to designate entry of the public notice for the next meeting of the Commission on Military and Veterans Affairs, pursuant to the revision of *Neb. Rev. Stat. §84-1411*, to the nebraska.gov website.

Hilgert noted that the public and media are well aware of the website for public meeting notices.

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

Moved by Bohac and seconded by Hilgert to designate entry of public notice on the Nebraska Public Meeting Calendar on nebraska.gov. Voting Aye: Bohac, Hilgert, Thompson, Donovan. Motion carried.

V. APPROVAL OF JUNE 8, 2021 COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES – Action/Vote

O'Donnell noted that the draft meeting minutes remained unchanged from the October 30th iteration of the meeting minutes mailed to the Commissioners.

Moved by Thompson and seconded by Donovan to approve the June 8, 2021 Commission meeting minutes. Voting Aye: Bohac, Hilgert, Thompson, Donovan. Motion carried.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD – November 10, 2021

No member of the public desired to speak before the Commission.

VII. VETERANS' PROGRAM COORDINATOR REPORT PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF *Neb. Rev. Stat. §48-203* – Veterans' Program Coordinator

Whited introduced himself as the Program Coordinator for Jobs for Veterans State Grant for the Nebraska Department of Labor and affirmed Nebraska's commitment to workforce development initiatives that help attract and retain veterans and their families to the state.

Whited described NDOL's Veterans Program comprised of Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) and Veterans Outreach Specialists. NDOL's Veterans Program has consistently surpassed federal performance requirements and will continue to develop pathways for military members and their families to enter the workforce.

Whited highlighted NDOL's Apprenticeship Coordinator as an organic member of the Veterans Program team. The State of Nebraska has collaborated with National Association

of Workforce Agencies (NASWA) to propose Apprenticeship Training to the National Veterans Training Institute, the entity that is required to provide training for all JVSG personnel across the country.

Whited highlighted worker training grants that support the retraining and upgrading of existing workers, currently employed in, or being trained for, high quality, long-term jobs.

Whited highlighted on the job training programs which help reimburse employers for the cost of training new employees and helping jobseekers quickly reenter the workforce while increasing their skills and earning a wage.

O'Donnell opened the floor to questions.

Nichole Reiner, Chief Strategy Officer for the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (NDED) described NDED's effort to promote the DoD's SkillBridge program. Reiner also described some challenges related to sharing Nebraska specific information through the transition assistance programs on Offutt AFB. Whited expressed interest in the opportunity to connect with exiting servicemembers.

Reiner highlighted a need to recruit the service members who already live in Nebraska, especially the highly skilled personnel transitioning from Offutt.

Whited acknowledged the challenge of engaging transitioning service members on Offutt. Stevenson suggested engaging organizations such as the Society for Human Resource Management and the Lincoln Human Resource Management Association.

O'Donnell noted that research suggests about 800-1,000 service members separate annually from Offutt Air Force Base and this networking event is "to the left of the DD-214," well ahead of service members' transition.

VIII. U.S. SPACE COMMAND UPDATE – Military Affairs Liaison

O'Donnell provided an update since the Commission's last meeting on June 8, 2021 regarding the City of Bellevue's self-nomination to host the permanent headquarters of the United States Space Command.

On June 9, 2021, Colorado's Congressional Delegation sent a letter to Vice President Harris making the case for Colorado as the best permanent home for U.S. Space Command.

On September 8, 2021, the Department of the Air Force released an updated iteration of the Support of Military Family comparative analysis results for Department of the Air Force installations. Of note, the Association of Defense Communities State Advisory Council has taken an interest in the methodology associated with this analysis and also how this analysis relates to the priorities of the DoD's Defense State Liaison Office. O'Donnell described the difference between a comparative approach and a standard based approach for evaluation of defense installations.

On September 23, 2021, the Department of the Air Force Strategic Basing Office requested information regarding aerospace industrial partners within the local area of Omaha, Nebraska (to be within one hour of Offutt AFB). This request for information is in response to requests from oversight organizations (such as the DoD IG, GAO, and various Congressional committees).

On September 24, 2021, O'Donnell provided a two-page memo in response to the Strategic Basing Office's request that was coordinated with the Omaha Chamber and the Department of Economic Development.

On September 28, 2021, the Omaha Chamber hosted a Mission Attraction Group meeting for stakeholders at the Northrup Grumman office in Bellevue.

On September 30, 2021, Colorado's Congressional Delegation sent a letter to Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall asking him to "conduct an urgent and thorough review of the Trump Administration's decision to move U.S. Space Command (USSPACECOM) from Colorado Springs, Colorado, to Huntsville, Alabama."

As of November 2021, results of the GAO and DoD IG investigations are expected in the spring of 2022.

O'Donnell asked the 55th Wing Designee, Ms. Nikki Nader, for comments.

Nader described the continuing environmental assessment evaluations of all final six candidate locations for the permanent headquarters of USSPACECOM. Nader described how a relatively recent (about 20 months prior) environmental survey showing no concerns for the site would not remain valid for USSPACECOM's planning timeline and thus Offutt would undergo another environmental assessment just like the other final candidate locations. The Wing received notice that USSPACECOM would no longer be doing environmental surveys and that responsibility for the survey would be transferred to the Air Force Civil Engineering Center.

Nader shared that Offutt's environmental survey is nearly complete pending a task regarding the notification of various Indian Tribes, specifically the Ponca Tribe.

IX. DELIBERATION – COMMISSION REPORT, RECOMMENDATIONS, COURSES OF ACTION

O'Donnell introduced Dr. Mitch Herian from the University of Nebraska Bureau of Business Research to present findings from The Economic Impact of Nebraska Military Assets: An Update for Fiscal Year 2020.

Herian presented the three special studies in the report.

In one special study, the team assessed the impact of legislative and regulatory changes related to military and veteran affairs. Overall, the team concluded that it is very difficult to quantify the impact or outcomes of policies and recommends tracking the use of benefits (exempted fees, professional license reciprocity, et al) by target populations (servicemembers, veterans, and military spouses) to the extent possible.

In a second special study, the authors studied veteran demographic trends in Nebraska. Like most states, the proportion of veterans as a part of the total population in Nebraska continues to decline. It is unclear whether the decline is the result of natural deaths or out-migration. Reiner asked Herian if he thought the new Blended Retirement System was causing these changes.

Hilgert suggest that it was based off of age and described the role of World War II and Vietnam impacting veteran demographics.

In a third special study, the research team examined the DoD and USDVA supply chains in Nebraska. Herian described the methodology and data sources used to identify federal contracts where Nebraska was the primary place of contract performance by a Nebraska based business. Of note, Douglas and Sarpy counties were identified as the top 2 (geographical) recipients of federal contracts during federal fiscal year 2020. The U.S. Air Force had the largest proportion of contracts by agency. Herian also described the methodology and data sources used to identify federal contracts where Nebraska was the primary place of contract performance by both a Nebraska based and non-Nebraska based businesses. Herian noted that the study could include both the limited analysis (only Nebraska based companies) or broader analysis (both Nebraska and non-Nebraska based companies). Herian also offered that trend analysis of the data could help inform the Commission in the future along with an analysis of where Nebraska businesses may have received a contract but sub-contracted the work to other businesses outside of Nebraska.

O'Donnell introduced Dr. Eric Thompson who joined the Commission meeting via Zoom.

Thompson described the economic impact of military bases in Nebraska and noted that the impact might be a little bit elevated due to construction activity but in other ways was consistent with past years.

Spending at military bases and installations in Fiscal Year 2020 accounted for \$2.5 billion in economic output, \$1.4 billion in employee compensation and almost 24,300 jobs. Thompson noted that he hopes to capture information regarding National Guard construction activity in the final report which may modestly bump up the economic impact. Thompson described other related impacts such as retirement and pension spending by the DoD. Thompson also noted economic impacts from VA activities, the Army Corps of Engineers, and GI Bill Spending. Thompson noted that UNL BBR does not add these 5 figures together in order to prevent confusing the overall impact of these military related things with the impact of Nebraska's military bases. Thompson noted that the overall impact from all sources is up due to the expansion of VA activity in the state this year.

O'Donnell opened the floor to questions.

Bohac noted that additional National Guard input is forthcoming.

Thompson emphasized that the analysis was limited to just the DoD and VA. Other U.S. government entities (such as NASA, DHS, et al) were not included.

O'Donnell offered that next steps would include incorporating Commissioner feedback, submitting a draft interim report by the 15th of November, and then follow through with a final report which would include any other external stakeholder data.

Bohac suggested setting a reasonable date for completion.

Herian offered that it would take a little more time to expand the special study to include all awardees regardless of location (expanding beyond just Nebraska businesses), but where Nebraska is the place of performance.

Bohac offered a final report date of December 31st.

**X. 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 Donovan to amend and submit a draft interim Commission report by November 15th and final report by December 31st pursuant to *Neb. Rev. Stat. §55-606*.
Voting Aye: Bohac, Hilgert, Thompson, Donovan. Motion carried.

XI. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Each of the Commissioners had an opportunity to share comments.

XII. MOTION TO ADJOURN – Action/Vote

Moved by Hilgert and seconded by Bohac to adjourn. Voting Aye: Bohac, Hilgert, Thompson, Donovan. Motion carried. Adjourned at 2:36 p.m.