

MINUTES

STATE OF NEBRASKA COMMISSION ON MILITARY AND VETERAN AFFAIRS

301 Centennial Mall South, PO Box 95083, Lincoln, NE 68509-5083

October 24, 2022 - 1:30 p.m. - 301 Centennial Mall South, 4th Floor, NDVA

The Commission on Military and Veteran Affairs (Commission) met on October 24, 2022, at 1:30 p.m. at 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

Dan Donovan, 2nd Congressional District

Dave Bloomfield, 3rd Congressional District

Commissioners present (nonvoting, ex officio members):

Jon Lokamas, Veterans' Program Coordinator, Nebraska Department of Labor

Rick Evans, Chair, State Committee Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve

Nikki Nader, 55th Wing Designee

Colonel David Preisman, U.S. Strategic Command Designee

Colonel John Roberts, 557th Weather Wing Designee

Joe Lauber, Representing the Nebraska Department of Economic Development

Commissioners excused (voting member):

Anthony Goins, Director, Nebraska Department of Economic Development

Tami Thompson, 1st Congressional District

Commissioners excused (nonvoting, ex officio members):

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, Donovan, Bloomfield, Lokamas, Evans, Nader, Preisman, and Roberts were present. Goins, and Thompson were excused. Lauber representing the Nebraska Department of Economic Development.

III. DELIBERATION – COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT AS REQUIRED BY NEB. REV. STAT. §55-606, RECOMMENDATIONS, COURSES OF ACTION

O'Donnell noted that 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. O'Donnell invited Dr. Eric Thompson and Dr. Mitch Herian to present The Economic Impact of Nebraska Military Assets: An Update for Fiscal Year 2021.

Thompson and Herian highlighted five sources of economic impact. Specifically:

- Spending at military bases and installations in FY 2021 accounted for \$2.5 billion in economic output, \$1.4 billion in employee compensation, and 24,176 jobs generated in Nebraska.
- Retirement and pension spending by Department of Defense (DoD) military retirees in Nebraska in FY 2021 generated 2,684 new jobs in Nebraska (in addition to the 24,176 noted above), resulting in \$128.6 million in compensation to these employees.
- Estimates show that VA spending in FY 2021 resulted in \$2.2 billion in economic output and the employment of 16,363 workers with a total salary of \$871.4 million.
- Army Corps of Engineers spending in FY 2021 resulted in \$144.0 million in economic output, 1,228 jobs, and \$87.5 million in employee compensation.
- GI Bill spending in the state in FY 2021 resulted in 396 jobs, \$16.1 million in salary, and \$36.4 million in economic output.

Thompson and Herian presented a special study regarding U.S. Department of Defense and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs contract spending in the State of Nebraska.

Commissioners asked questions and provided feedback to the authors.

IV. PROPOSED CHANGES AND SUBMISSION OF THE COMMISSION REPORT AS REQUIRED BY NEB. REV. STAT. §55-606 – Action/Vote

Moved by Hilgert and seconded by Bloomfield to proceed with proposed changes and submission of the Commission's annual report. Voting Aye: Bohac, Hilgert, Donovan, Bloomfield. Motion carried.

V. APPROVAL OF JUNE 21, 2022, COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES – Action/Vote

Hilgert was excused.

Moved by Bloomfield and seconded by Donovan to approve the June 21, 2022, Commission meeting minutes. Voting Aye: Donovan, Bloomfield. Abstain: Bohac. Motion carried.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD – October 24, 2022

O'Donnell noted the Commission's public comment rule and opened the floor for public comment.

Dean Kenkel, co-founder of the Nebraska Veterans Coalition addressed the Commission.

VII. VETERANS' PROGRAM COORDINATOR REPORT AS REQUIRED BY NEB. REV. STAT. §48-203 – Veterans' Program Coordinator

O'Donnell introduced John Lokamas, 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.

Lokamas provided a progress report to the Commission on Military and Veteran Affairs. Of note:

- The Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) State Coordinator is responsible for ensuring Federal and State program compliance and requires research of Federal and State laws, regulations, rules, and policies. The JVSG Program Coordinator is responsible for the oversight of grant performance and service delivery in Nebraska.
- The JVSG program supports the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist position, Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) staff, and Consolidated Position staff. The goal is to help veterans find meaningful careers by providing employment services at one-stop career centers and other locations.
- DVOP specialists provide individualized career services to veterans with significant barriers to employment, with the maximum emphasis directed toward serving veterans who are economically or educationally disadvantaged. Veterans with barriers include homeless veterans and vocational rehabilitation clients. DVOPs are only allowed to serve specific veteran populations, however LVERs are able to serve all veterans.
- Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs) conduct outreach to employers and business associations and engage in advocacy efforts with hiring executives to increase employment opportunities for veterans and encourage the hiring of disabled veterans.
- Consolidated Position staff serve in a dual role as both a DVOP and LVER. These positions were created to provide holistic services in rural areas of Nebraska by providing direct employment services to veterans and to educate and advance employer initiatives to hire and retain veterans.
- Staff receive training through the National Veteran Training Institute and conduct outreach efforts across the State.
- Nebraska is experiencing record low unemployment. The national average is 3.7%. The national veterans average is 2.7%. The Nebraska average is 2.1%. The Nebraska veterans average is 2.4%. There are over 51,000 posted open positions on NEworks (the State of Nebraska's employment site).

Commissioners asked questions and provided feedback to the Veterans' Program Coordinator.

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

O'Donnell provided an update regarding the City of Bellevue's self-nomination to host the permanent headquarters of the United States Space Command.

- July 2022, the Air Force Civil Engineer Center released a 482-page draft USSPACECOM Environmental Assessment for public review and comment (due August 12, 2022). Buried in an email (.pdf page 147 of the draft) is the statement “The Offutt AFB Nebraska (11-Acres) and Peterson AFB Colorado (14-Acres) sites are smaller than the Proposed Action's building and parking footprint of 18-Acres.” This statement suggests that the Air Force was estimating a need for 18-acres which was new information not previously communicated by the Air Force.
- On August 12, 2022, the Colorado Congressional delegation provide public comment to the draft USSPACECOM Environmental Assessment. The Colorado delegation letter made its case for the selection of Peterson Space Force Base as the preferred choice for U.S. Space Command's permanent headquarters.
- Of note, also on August 12, 2022, the Texas Congressional delegation wrote a letter to Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall making the case for Texas to become the future home of Space Training and Readiness Command (STARCOM) and for Secretary Kendall to expand possible locations for basing STARCOM beyond the current limitation that the United States Space Force (USSF) will only consider current Space Force Bases as the future home for STARCOM. The is important for Nebraska because there could be a potential opportunity to compete for one of STARCOM's subordinate commands, specifically “Delta 13.” “Delta 13 – Education - delivers institutional developmental education, develops U.S. Space Force officer accessions, and executes advanced education programs. Once the USSF establishes the curriculum and structure of Delta 13, it will undergo the Department of the Air Force strategic basing process to determine its permanent location.”
- September 2022, the Air Force Civil Engineer Center released its 496-page final USSPACECOM Environment Assessment.
- On September 30, 2022, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Installations) released the “FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI) ESTABLISHMENT OF PERMANENT UNITED STATES SPACE COMMAND HEADQUARTERS”. Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force Robert Moriarty, “determined that the proposed establishment of a permanent USSPACECOM HQ facility under any analyzed Alternative will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment with implementation of the enforceable regulatory compliance measures and design commitments identified, as applicable, for each Alternative. Accordingly, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. This decision has been made after taking into account all submitted information and considering a full range of reasonable alternatives that meet the purpose and need. The signing of this FONSI completes the environmental impact analysis process. The final basing decision will be documented in a subsequent basing decision memorandum.”

- As of October 2022, the decision to move U.S. Space Command (USSPACECOM) from Colorado Springs, Colorado, to Huntsville, Alabama appears to still stand. A final basing decision has yet to be documented in a subsequent basing decision memorandum.
- Moving forward we will continue to monitor the process and decision. Obtaining an unredacted copy of the DoD IG report is still a goal.
- More broadly, it may be useful to work toward addressing the Defense State Liaison Office FY23 Key Issues and closely monitor any changes or updates to the Support of Military Family assessments for Nebraska.
- On October 19th, the Department of Defense Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation released its Defense Spending by State report for FY21.

O'Donnell opened the floor to questions.

Bloomfield asked if it would be possible to prepare a Legislative Resolution to share with a State Senator to let the Department of the Air Force or Department of Defense know that Space Force missions would be welcome in Nebraska.

In consultation with NDVA's Deputy Legal Counsel, there was general agreement to move forward with drafting content for a potential Legislative Resolution and having another Commission meeting to affirm support for the draft content.

Evans offered that while it would be unlikely for Offutt AFB to compete for STARCOM, competing for a Space Force Delta (which equivalent to a Wing in the Air Force) could be more achievable.

Nader affirmed an openness to future strategic basing actions.

O'Donnell noted that 2015 was the last time there was a joint land use study and that the Office of the Local Defense Community Cooperation recommends a 5-year cycle for these types of studies.

Roberts described how the 557th Weather Wing works with the Deltas all of the time in space environmental monitoring. Additionally, the 557th Weather Wing does all of the DoD solar observing for the Army, Space Force, and Air Force from Offutt AFB.

IX. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Each of the Commissioners had an opportunity to share comments.

X. MOTION TO ADJOURN – Action/Vote

Moved by Bohac and seconded by Donovan to adjourn. Voting Aye: Bohac, Hilgert, Donovan, Bloomfield. Motion carried. Adjourned at 2:44 p.m.