

BRIAN SANDOVAL  
Governor



STATE OF NEVADA  
**NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS SERVICES**  
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## **2018 Veterans Legislative Symposia Report May 1, 2018**

### **1. Background:**

a. The Nevada Department of Veterans Services (NDVS) partnered with Nevada's United Veterans Legislative Council (UVLC) to host Veterans Legislative Symposia on March 24, 2018 in Reno and on March 31, 2018 in Las Vegas.

b. These biannual events serve as an opportunity to bring together representatives from the Nevada veteran's community to develop legislative recommendations for the upcoming legislative session. They also provide an opportunity to engage directly with other veterans on issues of concern and connect veterans with State legislators. The results of these symposia are compiled into a report and presented to the Governor and to members of the Nevada Legislature.

c. While the purpose of the Symposia is to identify issues that might be addressed by the State of Nevada Legislature, Federal issues are often raised by participants. These issues are presented to all members of Nevada's Congressional delegation for their review and consideration.

d. Until 2016, only one biennial symposium was held, alternating between Reno, Las Vegas, and Tonopah. Beginning in 2016, NDVS began to hold two symposia (one in Reno and one in Las Vegas) to better capture issues across the state. Additionally, travel was reimbursed for key veteran's representatives in rural veterans' organizations in Elko to reflect the needs of veterans in Eastern Nevada.

### **2. 2018 Veterans Legislative Symposia Overview:**

a. Participation: There were 71 veterans present in Reno and 89 in Las Vegas, representing 23 known veterans organizations. Also in attendance were members of the Nevada National Guard, active duty members serving at Nellis Air Force Base, family members, and other supporters.

b. Agenda:

(1) The symposia both started with opening remarks by NDVS Director Kat Miller, who explained the purpose of the symposia, and UVLC Chair Tony Yarbrough, who explained how veterans can get involved in the legislative process. In Reno, participants also heard from Mr. Cesar Melgarejo, Senior Policy Analyst with the Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB), State Senator Julia Ratti, and Assemblyman Jim Wheeler. Las Vegas participants received presentations from Mr. Jose Torres-Landeros, LCB Research Policy Analyst, State Senators David Parks, Pat Spearman, and Joyce Woodhouse, and Assembly members Chris Edwards, Brittney Miller, Tyrone Thompson and Daniele Monroe-Moreno.

(2) The participating state legislators provided invaluable insight regarding how veterans could contribute and be most effective during the upcoming Session. Additionally, Congresswoman Jacky Rosen presented information regarding citizen participation at the federal level along with an update of veterans' issues currently being considered by the United States Congress.

(3) Following the opening ceremonies and presentations, the floor was opened to veterans to present their individual or organizational issues or concerns. After all participants who wished to raise an item had been given the opportunity to speak, each participant was given the opportunity to vote on the legislative items they deemed most important in order to prioritize all the items presented.

**3. 2018 Veterans Legislative Symposia Outcomes:**

a. State-wide, 53 recommendations were identified/prioritized (Enclosure A); 31 issues in Las Vegas (Enclosure B) and 24 issues in Reno (Enclosure C). *(Because two identical issues were identified by both symposia, the combined state-wide list details 53, rather than 55, total prioritized recommendations.)*

b. There were a number of common state-wide themes that emerged from the recommendations made at both symposia. We created a report that aligned similar recommendations under eight identified themes (Enclosure D). These themes, in priority order, were:

**STATE-WIDE THEME 1:** Honor and recognize veteran's service by reducing certain state fees and taxes

**STATE-WIDE THEME 2:** Increase veteran service officer and veteran outreach capacity

**STATE-WIDE THEME 3:** Support veteran employment

**STATE-WIDE THEME 4:** Expand suicide prevention support and education

**STATE-WIDE THEME 5:** Support veterans housing initiatives

**STATE-WIDE THEME 6:** Enhance connection to veteran benefits

**STATE-WIDE THEME 7:** Honor veteran's service

**STATE-WIDE THEME 8:** Support veterans courts

c. Also developed from both events was a list of 24 items suggested for Congressional consideration. These issues were not prioritized and will be sent to Nevada's congressional delegation (Enclosure E).

d. Finally, some of the issues raised by participants did not have broad support by participants, but they might be representative of issues or concerns of veterans not present so while they may not be statistically relevant, they are worth reviewing.

#### **4. Conclusion:**

a. A review of the recommendations reveals few "stand-out" issues. This may be because many of the top issues identified in past legislative symposia were successfully passed into statute. For example, during the 79<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session, there were three main issues that garnered the majority of votes. This year, the recommendations were more diverse—characterized by some as "all over the board." Nonetheless, the state-wide prioritization shows some clear leaders among the recommendations and may help assist elected officials as they develop legislations that both honors the service of our veterans and helps ensure their successful reintegration into Nevada communities.

b. For additional information, please contact Director Kat Miller at [millerk@veterans.nv.gov](mailto:millerk@veterans.nv.gov) or Mr. David Johnson at [johnsond@veterans.nv.gov](mailto:johnsond@veterans.nv.gov).

**Enclosure A**  
**Combined State-Wide Priority List**

**PRIORITY 1: Allow the GI Bill to be used for the Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Academy and other non-college degree programs and allow veterans to use GI Bill benefits anytime during their lifetime.**

The recommender commented that some POST academies and other non-college degree programs are not eligible for GI Bill funding and that GI Bill Program eligibility should be expanded. During the issue discussion it was also recommended that the GI Bill be available at any time after separation from military service. *(Note: In researching this issue, it was discovered that the State of Nevada POST academy does accept the GI Bill; this recommendation refers to expanding GI Bill certification of non-state POST academies and other apprenticeship programs that may not currently be certified)*

**PRIORITY 2: Amend NRS 371.103 to consider active duty military serving in Nevada as residents for the purpose of vehicle registration.** NRS 371.103-104 provides tax exemptions to certain honorably discharged veterans. This would expand the benefit or exemption to include active duty military members.

**PRIORITY 3: Provide information regarding job training to homeless veterans.** There are many job-training programs available to veterans, but homeless veterans often lack knowledge of these programs due in part to lack of internet access. It was recommended that the State of Nevada create information programs specifically designed to reach this at-risk veterans population.

**PRIORITY 4: Fund Adopt a Vet Dental.** Adopt a Vet Dental Program (AAVD) provides pro bono dental care to Northern Nevada's low-income veterans in critical need. While around 56,000 veterans are enrolled in the Reno VA Hospital, only about 5% of those veterans qualify for dental care; this leaves the remaining 95% of the veterans unable to receive VA dental services so many low income veterans turn to AAVD to help. It was recommended that the State continue to provide funds to support this program

**PRIORITY 5: Expand tax exemptions for disabled veterans (vehicle registration, property tax, and other county services).** Nevada offers tax exemptions of \$6,250 to \$20,000 of assessed valuation to veterans with a service-connected disability of 60% or more. It was suggested to expand these tax exemptions to all disabled veteran with a VA disability rating.

**PRIORITY 6: Mandate Licensure reciprocity or waiving of business license and startup fees for active duty spouse.** Spouses of Active Duty military may move frequently, causing them time and expense associated with reestablishing their professional licenses. It was recommended that these spouses be considered

for license reciprocity to allow them to continue work in their desired workplace without having to pay for a new license in Nevada. *(Note: Under NRS 622, state regulatory bodies are required to develop opportunities for reciprocity of licensure for active members of, or spouses of active members of the military, however, these boards are not directed to do so.)*

**PRIORITY 7: State employees should not be monetarily penalized for serving in the Military/National Guard/Reserves.** The recommender commented that members of the Nevada National Guard that serve as State of Nevada employees are not receiving the same financial protections and benefits that guardsmen and women who work for private employers receive. According to the recommender, in 2013, the Legislature passed a bill that granted public employees who are members of the National Guard or Reserve paid leave to fulfill military duties. In 2015, the Legislature clarified provisions of this statute related to concurrent receipt of military and public employee pay: if the employee's military compensation is greater than his or her public employee pay, they receive only the military pay, and if it is less, they will receive their public employee pay less the total amount of their military pay. In the time it took to collect the pay, some state employees ended up in arrears.

**PRIORITY 8: The State of Nevada Woman Veterans Program Coordinator (WVPC) should be reclassified as a Veterans Service Officer (VSO).** The WVPC is responsible for providing specific information and comprehensive assistance to women veterans, their dependents, and beneficiaries concerning VA benefits and related non-VA benefits. It was recommended that this position be reclassified as a VSO so that they might be able to assist women veterans write and submit benefits claims to the VA.

**PRIORITY 9: Improve the support and training of veteran caregivers and families.** Help veterans with the daily activities of living. This duty can be mentally and physically demanding and often the health of veteran caregivers is at risk. There are ways for them to receive support, through peer meetings/ mentoring, training workshops, and a hotline specifically to talk through any problems that could appear. Many are not aware of these programs and it was recommended that the State do a better job informing caregivers of programs that can help them, and offering more or improved trainings that focus on the needs of the veterans they are caring for.

**PRIORITY 10: Child-care subsidies for single parent veterans**

The Division of Welfare and Supportive Services is the lead agency to administer the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). The CCDF offers the Child Care Program where they assist a variety of families facing certain difficulties like low-income families for example, in finding childcare so they can continue to work.

It was recommended that single-parent veteran families be added to this program, regardless of income thresholds.

**PRIORITY 11: Provide more programs to educate spouses and family members regarding suicide prevention.** While educating the veteran about suicide awareness and prevention is important, it is equally important that the veteran's family receive information on the signs and symptoms that can indicate that a veteran is suicidal. This education might help a family member recognize the possibility of suicide before it is too late. While there are some programs available (SafeTALK), many participants were not aware of them. It was recommended that the State do a better job publicizing suicide prevention programs.

**PRIORITY 12: Provide grants for mentors of Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) to attend specific national training.** VTC is a court-supervised program coupled with intensive treatment and supervision for misdemeanor criminal offenders. Veterans who enter the criminal justice system and are identified as having high treatment needs for either substance abuse or mental health issues can be candidates for VTC. The goal of VTC is to reduce re-arrests by giving the veteran a supervisor or mentor to work closely with to promote self-sufficiency through employment and education. It was recommended that VTC Program mentors are given a grant to attend national trainings specific to the veterans' treatment needs to successfully guide the veteran toward independence.

**PRIORITY 13: Expand funding for affordable housing and low-cost mortgages for veterans in need.** The VA funds about 600 agencies that provide more than 14,000 beds for eligible veterans. Programs like Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) and Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem (GPD) Program are both funded by the VA where low-income veterans are given help with housing. It was recommended that either State or Federal funding for affordable housing for veterans be increased to provide more housing options.

**PRIORITY 14: Ensure Emergency Medical Services (ambulance) transport veterans to the VA hospital rather than other area hospitals.** It was recommended that Las Vegas based ambulance services take veterans to the VA rather than to other area hospitals. *(More research is need to fully understand this recommendation, however, other symposium participants did note that ambulances normally take patients to the nearest appropriate emergency room and that this recommendation may not be practical.)*

**PRIORITY 15: Create a full-time Northern Nevada Outreach Coordinator.** Within the Nevada Department of Veterans Services, there is a full-time Outreach Director in southern Nevada. It was recommended that this same position be created in the northern part of the state. The Outreach Director conducts and

coordinates outreach to ensure that no matter where Nevada veteran lives, they have information about and access to benefits that improve their lives. These duties are currently conducted by a contracted employee.

**PRIORITY 16: The State of Nevada should develop programs to ensure that information regarding veteran and military discounts offered by businesses is publicized.** Many businesses both local and national offer discounts to veterans and active military members to show their appreciation for serving and protecting our country. It was recommended that the State of Nevada create and shares a program that publicizes all businesses that offer these discounts.

**PRIORITY 17: State continues action to prevent veteran suicide.** Veterans make up about 20% of all completed suicides including female Nevada veterans who are three times more likely to die by suicide than the general Nevada female population. Veterans who cope with aging, stress, PTSD from lingering effects from their service, and underlying mental health conditions have a higher risk of attempting suicide. The VA also provides help through a toll-free hotline and other knowledgeable services. It was recommended that more programs be created or enforced to help end the tragedy of veteran suicide.

**PRIORITY 18: Create Veteran Service Officer (VSO) positions in Pahrump and Fallon.** VSOs help veterans write and submit benefit claims to the VA as well as notifying veterans of the benefits their state government offer. Not only are VSOs critical to ensuring veterans can successfully file claims for needed services and compensation, on average VSOs help generate \$16M annually in federal benefits that return to Nevada. Both Fallon and Pahrump have limited VSO support available for their increasing population of veterans.

**PRIORITY 19: Waive fees for hunting and fishing licenses for veterans.** The State of Nevada Wildlife Division issues discounted hunting and fishing licenses for disabled veterans. It was recommended that these fees be waived for all veterans. This would also include fees for the educational courses to insure the veteran is a safe and responsible hunter.

**PRIORITY 20: Purple Heart license plates treated same as disabled license plate.** When wounded or killed by an instrument of war in any action against an enemy of the United States, the Purple Heart Medal is awarded. It was recommended that those with Purple Heart license plates also received the same benefits as those with a disabled license plate. If the Purple Heart license plates were treated similar to disabled plates, veterans would have the benefit of being able to have close parking and not having to walk long distances to get to their destinations.

**PRIORITY 21: Provide information / education to health care providers about service-connected medical conditions that may qualify for VA medical treatment and monetary compensation.** The VA has recognized certain cancers and other health problems as presumptive diseases associated with exposure to Agent Orange and other toxins and environmental hazards associated with military service. It was recommended that health care providers are informed about service-connected medical conditions (to include presumptive conditions) that may qualify for VA medical treatment and monetary compensation so they may inform veteran patients and veteran patient's spouses.

**PRIORITY 22: Provide free ASIST and safeTALK suicide prevention training for family and spouses.** The goal of safeTALK is to train individuals to be able to recognize a person with suicidal thoughts and provide education on how to connect them with a person who is trained in suicide first aid intervention. Those who attend the training learn about the TALK steps that include Tell, Ask, Listen, and Keep Safe and how to approach the person with suicidal thoughts in way that is inviting and respectful. It was recommended that more training opportunities should be offered and that they should not cost money for attendance. If this training was free, more people would learn how to detect possible suicide attempts.

**PRIORITY 23: Waive tuition and fees for veterans who are pursuing advanced degrees (Master's and higher) in a field identified as a critical Nevada work force shortage.** It was recommended that it would benefit both veterans and our state if veterans who have exhausted their 36 months of GI Bill benefits and wish to pursue an advanced degree (Master's and higher) in a field identified as a critical Nevada work force shortage have their tuition waived.

**PRIORITY 24: Change Purple Heart Plate to say, "Combat wounded" at the bottom.** It was recommended that the State of Nevada Purple Heart Plate be changed; the words at the bottom that say, "Silver State" should be changed to read, "Combat Wounded" to more clearly express what the plate represents.

**PRIORITY 25: Expand incentives for employers who hire veterans.** Employers who hire and train veterans may qualify to receive incentives and tax credits. It was recommended that these incentives be expanded / improved, especially when hiring a veteran into a Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) discipline.

**PRIORITY 26: Improve communication about mental health resources.** The mental health service at the VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System provides consultation, evaluation, and treatment for a variety of issues that can impact a veteran's emotional well-being. Veterans who suffer from depression, anxiety

PTSD, Military Sexual Trauma (MST), troublesome thoughts, addictive behaviors, etc., can receive treatments and be given further education on other resources while keeping the information share confidential. It was recommended that these resources and treatments need to be better communicated to veterans with mental health concerns.

**PRIORITY 27: State continues outreach to rural, Native American, and Incarcerated veterans.** Veterans who reside in rural communities, identify as Native American, or are incarcerated sometimes have difficulty accessing information or services. It was recommended that the state continues to reach out and educate these veterans about benefits they may be eligible for.

**PRIORITY 28: Provide financial assistance to veterans who are facing imminent or are at-risk of eviction.** Low-income veterans and their families can receive case management and assistance in getting public benefits as well as temporary financial assistance for rent payments, utility payments, security deposits, and moving costs. It was recommended that veterans should also have financial support available when they are threatened with eviction. This would reduce the chances of the veteran and their family from becoming homeless.

**PRIORITY 29: Make all veterans eligible for Veterans Court for all characters of discharge.** The Veterans Court Program is a process where the prosecutor, defense counsel, Judge, the Department of Veterans Affairs and other community based support organizations work together to rehabilitate and restore veterans to be active members of their community. Veterans with dishonorable discharges are not eligible for participation in Veterans Court. Because veterans who participate in this program are six times less likely to recidivate, it was recommended that all veterans should have access to the Veterans Court and the resources they provide.

**PRIORITY 30: Provide and publicize information about resources for homeless veterans.** Information about resources that can help homeless veterans needs to be better publicized to the veteran homeless population to help them off the streets and into their own home.

**PRIORITY 31: No cost for veterans' license plate.** Having a veteran license plate shows the veteran's pride of serving their country and allows others to recognize those who served. It was recommended that veterans' license plates should be free and they should only have to pay for any added personalized details.

**PRIORITY 32: Eliminate corporate fee for veteran's service organizations.** Veteran service organizations can be "chartered" or supported federally as well as recognized or approved by the VA Secretary for purposes of preparation,

presentation, and prosecution of claims under laws of the Department of Veterans Affairs. It was recommended that the corporate fees that these organizations usually have to pay should be eliminated all together.

**PRIORITY 33: Require funeral homes to ask if the deceased is a veteran prior to burial.** Many families make funeral arrangement without understanding burial benefits their deceased veteran may be eligible for. It was recommended that funeral homes should be required to ask if the deceased is a veteran prior to the burial to help families understand and access these burial benefits.

**PRIORITY 34: Assist to set up women veterans' transitional home for at-risk veterans who may have PTSD or financial issues.** Some women veterans face challenges when returning to civilian life; statistics show that women veterans are three times more likely to commit suicide than their civilian counterparts. It was recommended that a transitional home for women veterans who suffer from conditions such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or who face significant financial issues should be created to provide a safe and healthy living environment as they recover and reintegrate back into civilian life.

**PRIORITY 35: Active-duty to pay resident fee for hunting and fishing licenses.** The State of Nevada Wildlife Division issues discounted hunting and fishing licenses for disabled veterans and active duty members. Active duty members who are not state residents pay a higher fee for hunting and fishing licenses than state residents. It was recommended that those active duty members living in Nevada be treated as residents for the purpose of obtaining these licenses.

**PRIORITY 36: Have a weekend burial option at State of Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemeteries.** In Nevada, there are two veterans memorial cemeteries, both of which offer only weekday burial options. With the addition of a weekend burial option, family members who might not be able to get time off from work might still be able to attend the burial of their loved one.

**PRIORITY 37: Provide round-trip transportation to essential services in Las Vegas for rural veterans living in Cold Creek, Indian Springs, and Mount Charleston.** It was recommended that a round-trip transportation system be established for low-income rural veterans in Cold Creek, Indian Springs, and Mount Charleston to run weekly errands, attend necessary appointments, or to just simply get out of their home for a couple hours. This would also give veteran's caregivers needed respite.

**PRIORITY 38: Interstate 11 should be designed as a "Purple Heart Highway."** The Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) is working with the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada (RTC) to complete construction of Interstate 11. Interstate 11 will link Las Vegas and Phoenix and help relieve

congestion, improve safety, and enhance travel and commerce. It was recommended that Interstate 11 would be named a "Purple Heart Highway," reminding motorists of the high price many have paid so Americans can travel and live in a free society.

**PRIORITY 39: Create a Nevada Women Veteran's week in March.** The percentage of women serving as an active duty member continues to increase and the acknowledgement of their service to our Nation is important. It was recommended that Nevada establish the third week in March as Nevada Military Women's Week. This would act as an educational opportunity for women veterans to learn about their benefits and help raise awareness about women serving in the military.

**PRIORITY 40: Create a State of Nevada Military Museum.** Many states across the nation have a state military museum to remind us of the many sacrifices made by previous generations to keep our nation free. It was recommended that Nevada create a military museum that provides an interactive and educational resource for the public as a place for veterans to be acknowledged and be reminded of the pride that comes with serving to protect our nation.

**PRIORITY 41: Create a Nevada State Inspector General (IG).** IGs work to independently and objectively combat waste, fraud, and abuse in the programs and operations of their parent agency. It was recommended that Nevada create an Inspector General position to independently investigate issues associated with State government.

**PRIORITY 42: Mandate certain State Agencies provide information to VIS.** The Nevada Veterans Information System (VIS) is a research database that lists demographic information about Nevada veterans and enables state agencies to better identify and connect with veterans in order to ensure they are accessing benefits and services that improve their lives. It was recommended that state agencies that collect veterans information provide this information into VIS to improve the State's ability to identify and support its veterans.

**PRIORITY 43: Create a database identifying veteran-owned and service disabled veteran-owned businesses.** While there are many local state and service disabled veteran-owned businesses in Nevada, it is not publicized where these businesses are located. It was recommended that a database is created where a list of the local state and service disabled veteran-owned businesses in Nevada organized by city or county. It was also suggested that this database included businesses that offer discounts to veterans.

**PRIORITY 44: Waive tuition and fees for children of disabled veterans.** It was recommended that college tuition and fees for children of all disabled veterans are waived.

**PRIORITY 45: The State of Nevada should review "void of enlistment" discharges.** Void enlistments may or may not be the result of fraudulent intent on the service member's part when the contract for military service is illegal. This can include the member signing the contract being under aged, signing the contract under coercion, lying or under-sharing their personal history, among other situations. It was asked that the state reviews and updates the void of enlistment discharges.

**PRIORITY 46: Deputize volunteers to work with funeral homes to identify veterans** In funeral homes across Nevada, cremated remains lay unclaimed. If these homes knew that remains were those of a veteran, these remains could be interred with honor at a State Veterans Memorial Cemetery. It was recommended that the State "deputize" volunteers and give them authority to work with funeral homes to help identify unclaimed veterans remains.

**PRIORITY 47: Create Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy treatment options for veterans with a traumatic brain injury or PTSD to speed up recovery.** Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT) is a medical treatment that enhances the body's natural healing process by inhalation of 100% oxygen in a total body chamber, where atmospheric pressure is increased and controlled. Although the VA has offered HBOT as a treatment option for a limited number of veterans with PTSD, it was recommended that the VA expand HBOT options for veterans with a traumatic brain injury or PTSD.

**PRIORITY 48: Mandate guidelines and education between Service dogs and companion dogs.** There are many programs that allow free service or companion dogs to veterans who suffer from disabilities resulting from service to nation. These dogs provide a sense of safety for the veterans to live a more comfortable and independent life. It was recommended that training be provided to veterans so they understand the difference between service and companion dogs and also be trained and educated about how to care for a service or companion dog.

**PRIORITY 49: Mandate builders, at a reasonable fee, to accommodate those with disabilities.** Some veterans with disabilities face difficulties associated with building design or equipment. It was recommended that the state should require builders, for a reasonable fee, to create disabled access features.

**PRIORITY 50: Require County Assessors to list the exact amount of tax exemption on their notice that they mail to veterans.** The Nevada Legislature provides tax exemptions to Nevada veterans who have served a minimum of 90 continuous

days of active duty of which at least one day fell between a certain wartime, campaign, or expedition period. It was recommended that veterans should be informed in writing of the exact amount of tax exemption or credit they are eligible for.

**PRIORITY 51: Consider involving veterans in programs supporting school security.** With the current security threats in schools, it was recommended that veterans should get involved in programs supporting school security. This could entail veterans being hired to directly provide security, or by helping train school security guards.

**PRIORITY 52: Waive startup and licensing fees for veterans who seek to open their first business.** It was recommended that all business startup licensing fees should be waived for veterans who are starting a first business.

**PRIORITY 53: Ensure state employees who are veterans and their families have access to mental health care.** It was recommended that state employees and their families who suffer from mental health disorders should also have access to mental health care.

**Enclosure B**  
**Las Vegas Veterans Legislative Symposium**  
**March 31, 2018**

**PRIORITY 1: Allow the GI Bill to be used for the Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Academy and other non-college degree programs and allow veterans to use GI Bill benefits anytime during their lifetime.**

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**PRIORITY 12: Provide information / education to health care providers about service-connected medical conditions that may qualify for VA medical treatment and monetary compensation.** The VA has recognized certain cancers and other health problems as presumptive diseases associated with exposure to Agent Orange and other toxins and environmental hazards associated with military service. It was recommended that health care providers are informed about service-connected medical conditions (to include presumptive conditions) that may qualify for VA medical treatment and monetary compensation so they may inform veteran patients and veteran patient's spouses.

**PRIORITY 13: Waive tuition and fees for veterans who are pursuing advanced degrees (Master's and higher) in a field identified as a critical Nevada work force shortage.** It was recommended that it would benefit both veterans and our state if veterans who have exhausted their 36 months of GI Bill benefits and wish to pursue an advanced degree (Master's and higher) in a field identified as a critical Nevada work force shortage have their tuition waived.

**PRIORITY 14: Expand incentives for employers who hire veterans.** Employers who hire and train veterans may qualify to receive incentives and tax credits. It was recommended that these incentives be expanded / improved, especially when hiring a veteran into a Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) discipline.

**PRIORITY 15: Improve communication about mental health resources.** The mental health service at the VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System provides consultation, evaluation, and treatment for a variety of issues that can impact a veteran's emotional well-being. Veterans who suffer from depression, anxiety

PTSD, Military Sexual Trauma (MST), troublesome thoughts, addictive behaviors, etc., can receive treatments and be given further education on other resources while keeping the information share confidential. It was recommended that these resources and treatments need to be better communicated to veterans with mental health concerns.

**PRIORITY 16: Provide financial assistance to veterans who are facing imminent or are at-risk of eviction.** Low-income veterans and their families can receive case management and assistance in getting public benefits as well as temporary financial assistance for rent payments, utility payments, security deposits, and moving costs. It was recommended that veterans should also have financial support available when they are threatened with eviction. This would reduce the chances of the veteran and their family from becoming homeless.

**PRIORITY 17: Provide and publicize information about resources for homeless veterans.** Information about resources that can help homeless veterans needs to be better publicized to the veteran homeless population to help them off the streets and into their own home.

**PRIORITY 18: Require funeral homes to ask if the deceased is a veteran prior to burial.** Many families make funeral arrangement without understanding burial benefits their deceased veteran may be eligible for. It was recommended that funeral homes should be required to ask if the deceased is a veteran prior to the burial to help families understand and access these burial benefits.

**PRIORITY 19: Assist to set up women veterans' transitional home for at-risk veterans who may have PTSD or financial issues.** Some women veterans face challenges when returning to civilian life; statistics show that women veterans are three times more likely to commit suicide than their civilian counterparts. It was recommended that a transitional home for women veterans who suffer from conditions such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or who face significant financial issues should be created to provide a safe and healthy living environment as they recover and reintegrate back into civilian life.

**PRIORITY 20: Active-duty to pay resident fee for hunting and fishing licenses.** The State of Nevada Wildlife Division issues discounted hunting and fishing licenses for disabled veterans and active duty members. Active duty members who are not state residents pay a higher fee for hunting and fishing licenses than state residents. It was recommended that those Active duty members living in Nevada be treated as residents for the purpose of obtaining these licenses.

**PRIORITY 21: Provide round-trip transportation to essential services in Las Vegas for rural veterans living in Cold Creek, Indian Springs, and Mount Charleston.**

It was recommended that a round-trip transportation system be established for low-income rural veterans in Cold Creek, Indian Springs, and Mount Charleston to run weekly errands, attend necessary appointments, or to just simply get out of their home for a couple hours. This would also give veteran's caregivers needed respite.

**PRIORITY 22: Create Veteran Service Officer (VSO) positions in Pahrump and Fallon.** VSOs help veterans write and submit benefit claims to the VA as well as notifying veterans of the benefits their state government offer. Not only are VSOs critical to ensuring veterans can successfully file claims for needed services and compensation, on average VSOs help generate \$16M annually in federal benefits that return to Nevada. Both Fallon and Pahrump have limited VSO support available for their increasing population of veterans.

**PRIORITY 23: Interstate 11 should be designed as a "Purple Heart Highway."** The Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) is working with the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada (RTC) to complete construction of Interstate 11. Interstate 11 will link Las Vegas and Phoenix and help relieve congestion, improve safety, and enhance travel and commerce. It was recommended that Interstate 11 would be named a Purple Heart Highway, reminding motorists of the high price many have paid so Americans can travel and live in a free society.

**PRIORITY 24: Create a Nevada State Inspector General (IG).** IGs work to independently and objectively combat waste, fraud, and abuse in the programs and operations of their parent agency. It was recommended that Nevada create an Inspector General position to independently investigate issues associated with State government.

**PRIORITY 25: Deputize volunteers to work with funeral homes to identify veterans**

In funeral homes across Nevada, cremated remains lay unclaimed. If these homes knew that remains were those of a veteran, these remains could be interred with honor at a State Veterans Memorial Cemetery. It was recommended that the State "deputize" volunteers and give them authority to work with funeral homes to help identify unclaimed veterans remains.

**PRIORITY 26: Create Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy treatment options for veterans with a traumatic brain injury or PTSD to speed up recovery.** Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT) is a medical treatment that enhances the body's natural healing process by inhalation of 100% oxygen in a total body chamber, where atmospheric pressure is increased and controlled. Although the VA has offered

HBOT as a treatment option for a limited number of veterans with PTSD, it was recommended that the VA expand HBOT options for veterans with a traumatic brain injury or PTSD.

**PRIORITY 27: Mandate builders, at a reasonable fee, to accommodate those with disabilities.** Some veterans with disabilities face difficulties associated with building design or equipment. It was recommended that the state should require builders, for a reasonable fee, to create disabled access features.

**PRIORITY 28: Require County Assessors to list the exact amount of tax exemption on their notice that they mail to veterans.** The Nevada Legislature provides tax exemptions to Nevada veterans who have served a minimum of 90 continuous days of active duty of which at least one day fell between a certain wartime, campaign, or expedition period. It was recommended that veterans should be informed in writing of the exact amount of tax exemption or credit they are eligible for.

**PRIORITY 29: Consider involving veterans in programs supporting school security.** With the current security threats in schools, it was recommended that veterans should get involved in programs supporting school security. This could entail veterans being hired to directly provide security, or by helping train school security guards.

**PRIORITY 30: Waive startup and licensing fees for veterans who seek to open their first business.** It was recommended that all business startup licensing fees should be waived for veterans who are starting a first business.

**PRIORITY 31: Ensure state employees who are veterans and their families have access to mental health care.** It was recommended that state employees and their families who suffer from mental health disorders should also have access to mental health care.

**Enclosure C**  
**Reno Veterans Legislative Symposium**  
**March 24, 2018**

**PRIORITY 1: Fund Adopt a Vet Dental Program.** Adopt a Vet Dental Program (AAVD) provides pro bono dental care to Northern Nevada's low-income veterans in critical need. While around 56,000 veterans are enrolled in the Reno VA Hospital, only about 5% of those veterans qualify for dental care; this leaves the remaining 95% of the veterans unable to receive VA dental services so many low income veterans turn to AAVD to help. It was recommended that the State continue to provide funds to support this program

**PRIORITY 2: The State of Nevada Woman Veterans Program Coordinator (WVPC) should be reclassified as a Veterans Service Officer (VSO).** The WVPC is responsible for providing specific information and comprehensive assistance to women veterans, their dependents, and beneficiaries concerning VA benefits and related non-VA benefits. It was recommended that this position be reclassified as a VSO so that they might be able to assist women veterans write and submit benefits claims to the VA.

**PRIORITY 3: Improve the support and training of veteran caregivers and families.** Help veterans with the daily activities of living. This duty can be mentally and physically demanding and often the health of veteran caregivers is at risk. There are ways for them to receive support, through peer meetings/ mentoring, training workshops, and a hotline specifically to talk through any problems that could appear. Many are not aware of these programs and it was recommended that the State do a better job informing caregivers of programs that can help them, and offering more or improved trainings that focus on the needs of the veterans they are caring for.

**PRIORITY 4: Provide more programs to educate spouses and family members regarding suicide prevention.** While educating the veteran about suicide awareness and prevention is important, it is equally important that the veteran's family receive information on the signs and symptoms that can indicate that a veteran is suicidal. This education might help a family member recognize the possibility of suicide before it is too late. While there are some programs available (SafeTalk), many participants were not aware of them. It was recommended that the State do a better job publicizing suicide prevention programs.

**PRIORITY 5: Expand funding for affordable housing and low-cost mortgages for veterans in need.** The VA funds about 600 agencies that provide more than 14,000 beds for eligible veterans. Programs like Supportive Services for Veteran

Families (SSVF) and Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem (GPD) Program are both funded by the VA where low-income veterans are given help with housing. It was recommended that either State or Federal funding for affordable housing for veterans be increased to provide more housing options.

**PRIORITY 6: Create a full-time Northern Nevada Outreach Coordinator.** Within the Nevada Department of Veterans Services, there is a full-time Outreach Director in southern Nevada. It was recommended that this same position be created in the northern part of the state. The Outreach Director conducts and coordinates outreach to ensure that no matter where Nevada veteran lives, they have information about and access to benefits that improve their lives. These duties are currently conducted by a contracted employee.

**PRIORITY 7: State continues action to prevent veteran suicide.** Veterans make up about 20% of all completed suicides including female Nevada veterans who are three times more likely to die by suicide than the general Nevada female population. Veterans who cope with aging, stress, PTSD from lingering effects from their service, and underlying mental health conditions have a higher risk of attempting suicide. The VA also provides help through a toll-free hotline and other knowledgeable services. It was recommended that more programs be created or enforced to help end the tragedy of veteran suicide.

**PRIORITY 8: Create Veteran Service Officer (VSO) positions in Pahrump and Fallon.** VSOs help veterans write and submit benefit claims to the VA as well as notifying veterans of the benefits their state government offer. Not only are VSOs critical to ensuring veterans can successfully file claims for needed services and compensation, on average VSOs help generate \$16M annually in federal benefits that return to Nevada. Both Fallon and Pahrump have limited VSO support available for their increasing population of veterans.

**PRIORITY 9: Waive fees for hunting and fishing licenses for veterans.** The State of Nevada Wildlife Division issues discounted hunting and fishing licenses for disabled veterans. It was recommended that these fees be waived for all veterans. This would also include fees for the educational courses to insure the veteran is a safe and responsible hunter.

**PRIORITY 10: Purple Heart license plates treated same as disabled license plate.** When wounded or killed by an instrument of war in any action against an enemy of the United States, the Purple Heart Medal is awarded. It was recommended that those with Purple Heart license plates also received the same benefits as those with a disabled license plate. If the Purple Heart license plates were treated similar to disabled plates, veterans would have the benefit

of being able to have close parking and not having to walk long distances to get to their destinations.

**PRIORITY 11: Provide free ASIST and safeTALK suicide prevention training for family and spouses.** The goal of safeTALK is to train individuals to be able to recognize a person with suicidal thoughts and provide education on how to connect them with a person who is trained in suicide first aid intervention. Those who attend the training learn about the TALK steps that include Tell, Ask, Listen, and Keep Safe and how to approach the person with suicidal thoughts in way that is inviting and respectful. It was recommended that more training opportunities should be offered and that they should not cost money for attendance. If this training was free, more people would learn how to detect possible suicide attempts.

**PRIORITY 12: Change Purple Heart Plate to say, "Combat wounded" at the bottom.** It was recommended that the State of Nevada Purple Heart Plate be changed; the words at the bottom that say "Silver State" should be changed to read, "Combat Wounded" to more clearly express what the plate represents.

**PRIORITY 13: State continues outreach to rural, Native American, and incarcerated veterans.** Veterans who reside in rural communities, identify as Native American, or are incarcerated sometimes have difficulty accessing information or services. It was recommended that the state continues to reach out and educate these veterans about benefits they may be eligible for.

**PRIORITY 14: Make all veterans eligible for Veterans Court for all characters of discharge.** The Veterans Court Program is a process where the prosecutor, defense counsel, Judge, the Department of Veterans Affairs and other community based support organizations work together to rehabilitate and restore veterans to be active members of their community. Veterans with dishonorable discharges are not eligible for participation in Veterans Court. Because veterans who participate in this program are six time less likely to recidivate, it was recommended that all veterans should have access to the Veterans Court and the resources they provide.

**PRIORITY 15: No cost for veterans' license plate.** Having a veteran license plate shows the veteran's pride of serving their country and allows others to recognize those who served. It was recommended that veterans' license plates should be free and they should only have to pay for any added personalized details.

**PRIORITY 16: Eliminate corporate fee for veterans service organizations.** Veteran service organizations can be "chartered" or supported federally as well as recognized or approved by the VA Secretary for purposes of preparation,

presentation, and prosecution of claims under laws of the Department of Veterans Affairs. It was recommended that the corporate fees that these organizations usually have to pay should be eliminated all together.

**PRIORITY 17: Have a weekend burial option at State of Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemeteries.** In Nevada, there are two veterans memorial cemeteries, both of which offer only weekday burial options. With the addition of a weekend burial option, family members who might not be able to get time off from work might still be able to attend the burial of their loved one.

**PRIORITY 18: Create a Nevada Women Veteran's week in March.** The percentage of women serving as an active duty member continues to increase and the acknowledgement of their service to our Nation is important. It was recommended that Nevada establish the third week in March as Nevada Military Women's Week. This would act as an educational opportunity for women veterans to learn about their benefits and help raise awareness about women serving in the military.

**PRIORITY 19: Create a State of Nevada Military Museum.** Many states across the nation have a state military museum to remind us of the many sacrifices made by previous generations to keep our nation free. It was recommended that Nevada create a military museum that provides an interactive and educational resource for the public as a place for veterans to be acknowledged and be reminded of the pride that comes with serving to protect our nation.

**PRIORITY 20: Mandate certain State Agencies provide information to VIS.** The Nevada Veterans Information System (VIS) is a research database that lists demographic information about Nevada veterans and enables state agencies to better identify and connect with veterans in order to ensure they are accessing benefits and services that improve their lives. It was recommended that state agencies that collect veterans information provide this information into VIS to improve the State's ability to identify and support its veterans.

**PRIORITY 21: Create a database identifying veteran-owned and service disabled veteran-owned businesses.** While there are many local state and service disabled veteran-owned businesses in Nevada, it is not publicized where these businesses are located. It was recommended that a database is created where a list of the local state and service disabled veteran-owned businesses in Nevada organized by city or county. It was also suggested that this database included businesses that offer discounts to veterans.

**PRIORITY 22: Waive tuition and fees for children of disabled veterans.** It was recommended that college tuition and fees for children of all disabled veterans are waived.

**PRIORITY 23: The State of Nevada should review "void of enlistment" discharges.** Void enlistments may or may not be the result of fraudulent intent on the service member's part when the contract for military service is illegal. This can include the member signing the contract being under aged, signing the contract under coercion, lying or under sharing their personal history, among other situations. It was asked that the state reviews and updates the void of enlistment discharges.

**PRIORITY 24: Mandate guidelines and education between Service dogs and companion dog.** There are many programs that allow free service or companion dogs to veterans who suffer from disabilities resulting from service to nation. These dogs provide a sense of safety for the veterans to live a more comfortable and independent life. It was recommended that training be provided to veterans so they understand the difference between service and companion dogs and also be trained and educated about how to care for a service or companion dog.

**Enclosure D**  
**Consolidation of Similar Themes List**

**THEME 1: Honoring and recognizing veteran's service by reducing state fees and taxes (111 votes)**

L - PRIORITY 2: Amend NRS 371.103 to consider active duty military serving in Nevada as residents for the purpose of vehicle registration

L- PRIORITY 4: Tax exemptions for disabled veterans for vehicle registration, property tax, and other county services

L- PRIORITY 5: Mandate licensure reciprocity or waiving of business license and startup fees for active duty spouses

L- PRIORITY 20: Active-duty to pay resident fee for hunting and fishing license

L- PRIORITY 30: Waive startup and licensing fees for veterans who seek to open their first business

R- PRIORITY 9: Waive fees for hunting and fishing licenses for veterans

R- PRIORITY 15: No cost for veterans' license plate

R- PRIORITY 16: Eliminate corporate fee for veterans service organizations

R- PRIORITY 22: Waive tuition and fees for children of disabled veterans

**THEME 2: Increasing Veteran Service Officer and Outreach Capacity (89 votes)**

L- PRIORITY 7: Woman veteran coordinator position upgraded to VSO

L- PRIORITY 22: Veteran Service Officer in Pahrump and Fallon

R- PRIORITY 2: Change the Women Veteran Coordinator to VSO to better serve women veterans

R- PRIORITY 6: Create a full-time Northern Nevada Outreach Coordinator.

R- PRIORITY 8: Pursue more VSO capacity throughout Nevada, Fallon and Pahrump

R- PRIORITY 13: State continues outreach to rural, Native American, and Incarcerated veterans

**THEME 3: Support Veteran Employment (77 votes)**

L- PRIORITY 5: Reciprocal licensing recognizing the certain business licenses from other states/or waiving for certain business license fees such as startup fees for active duty spouse

Consolidation of Similar Themes List  
May 1, 2018

L- PRIORITY 6: State employees to not be monetarily penalized for serving in the Military/National Guard/Reserves

L- PRIORITY 8: Child-care subsidies for single parent veterans

L- PRIORITY 13: Workforce Development Bill tied to identified critical job skills and critical job placement to allow veterans to use their GI Bill benefit (funding) to earn a Master's Degree or higher

L- PRIORITY 14: Expand incentives for employers who hire veterans; taxes, STEM/critical needs

L- PRIORITY 30: Waive startup and licensing fees for veterans who seek to open their first business

R- PRIORITY 21: Database to provide and determine local state veteran-owned and service disabled veteran-owned business

**THEME 4: Expanding Suicide Prevention and Education (47 votes)**

L- PRIORITY 15: Improve communication about mental health resources

R- PRIORITY 4: Provide more programs to educate spouses and family members regarding suicide prevention

R- PRIORITY 7: State continues action to prevent veteran suicide

R- PRIORITY 11: Fund ASSIST and safeTALK training for family members

**THEME 5: Support Veterans Housing Initiatives (38 votes)**

L- PRIORITY 16: Provide financial assistance to veterans who are facing imminent or are at-risk of eviction

L- PRIORITY 17: Provide and publicize information about resources for homeless veterans

L- PRIORITY 19: Assist to set up women veterans' transitional home for at-risk veterans who may have PTSD or financial issues

L- PRIORITY 27: Mandate builders, at a reasonable fee, to accommodate those with disabilities

R- PRIORITY 5: Expand funding for affordable housing and low-cost mortgages for veterans in need

**THEME 6: Enhance Connection to Veteran Benefits and Opportunities (32 votes)**

L- PRIORITY 11: Develop program identifying businesses that offer veteran/military discounts

Consolidation of Similar Themes List  
May 1, 2018

L- PRIORITY 12: Offer education to health care providers so they may learn about VA health benefits, including presumptive diseases, so they may inform veteran patients and veteran patient's spouse

L- PRIORITY 18: Require funeral homes to ask if the deceased is a veteran prior to burial

L- PRIORITY 25: Deputize volunteers to work with funeral homes to identify veterans

R- PRIORITY 20: Mandate certain State Agency, to provide information to VIS to better identify/find Veterans easily

**THEME 7: Honoring Veterans Service (27 votes)**

L- PRIORITY 23: Interstate 11 to be named a Purple Heart Highway

R- PRIORITY 12: Change Purple Heart plate to say, "Combat Wounded" at the bottom

R- PRIORITY 18: Having a Nevada Women Veteran's week in March

R- PRIORITY 19: Create a State of Nevada Military Museum

**THEME 8: Supporting Veterans Court (18 votes)**

L- PRIORITY 9: Provide grants for mentors of Veterans Treatment Court to attend specific National training

R- PRIORITY 14: Make all veterans eligible for Veterans Court for all characters of discharge

**Enclosure E**  
**Items for Congressional Consideration**

The following items were identified for Congressional consideration; these issues were not prioritized and will be sent to Nevada's congressional delegation for their information.

**Reno:**

- Improve support and training for veteran caregivers and their families
- Improve guidelines for women veterans to receive the appropriate and necessary mammogram screenings
- Lower the threshold from 100% to 50-60% disability rating for CHAMPVA
- Offer the Forever GI Bill to all veterans
- Support S.2105 Bill which expands medical help to veterans who served in Thailand
- Support the completion of the US Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans (VA) Burial ground in Elko; this project is lagging
- Maintain low rates for CHOICE
- Provide proper fitting prosthetics for women during the different stages of their pregnancies
- Expand caregiver support to include all veterans, not just Post-9/11 veterans
- Provide veterans with land for Team Rubicon to use for recreation and fire suppression

**Las Vegas:**

- Increase the number of mental health care providers
- Offer Child-care substantiates for single-parent veterans
- Continue VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) and/or pension benefits for the life of children and family members
- Work to publicize volunteer opportunities in the VA hospital
- Speed up time for clients to get a hearing for their claim with VA
- Continuation of education for healthcare providers; require them to ask patient if patients were affected by Agent Orange so that the veteran patient might and access needed benefits
- Change formula for surviving spouse benefits so these spouses do not need to be at poverty level to get help
- Expand care for family members of veterans with PTSD from limited visits to unlimited visits