

Joe Lombardo
Governor



NEVADA VETERANS SERVICES COMMISSION

Recommendations to the Governor and the Nevada Legislature Prepared by the Veterans Services Commission (VSC) February 15, 2024

1. Executive Summary

a. This report fulfills the requirement of Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) 417.190 that the VSC submit a report to the Governor, the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs, and the Director of the Legislative Counsel by February 15 of each even-numbered year. The report:

(1) summarizes the activities of the Commission during the preceding two fiscal years (July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2023),

(2) makes recommendations to the Governor, the Legislature, and the Director of the Nevada Department of Veterans Services (NDVS) regarding issues relating to veterans, and,

(3) makes recommendations to the Governor pursuant to NRS 417.400 (Recommendation by the VSC of deceased to be honored).

b. Attached to this report are the past year's VSC agendas and minutes so recipients may make a more detailed review of the Commission's activities if they wish (see Enclosure A).

c. The VSC considers the most important aspect of this report to be the 10 recommendations starting on page three. These recommendations cover a wide range of topics, to include improving employment outcomes for veterans and their spouses, expanding veteran health care options, honoring Nevada's veterans, and ensuring every Nevada veteran understands the benefits their service has earned them.

2. VSC's Duties and Responsibilities

a. NRS 417.150 creates the Veterans Services Commission, establishes the composition of its members, its duties, and outlines requirements for its meetings.

b. As the primary advisory body for state-funded veterans' services in Nevada, the VSC brings together a diverse group of representatives from various veteran service organizations and includes State Legislators and members of the Northern and Southern Nevada Veteran Memorial Cemetery Advisory Committees.

c. According to NRS 417.190, the VSC shall:

(1) advise the Director (NDVS), and

(2) prepare and submit a report, on or before February 15 of each even-numbered year, to the Governor, the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs, and the Director of the Legislative Counsel Bureau for transmittal to the Legislative Commission. The report must, without limitation:

(a) summarize the activities of the Commission during the preceding two calendar years, and,

Recommendations to the Governor and the Nevada Legislature as prepared by the Veterans Services Commission (VSC)
February 15, 2024

(b) make recommendations to the Governor, the Legislature, the NDVS Director regarding issues relating to veterans.

d. Biographies for each member are provided in Enclosure B of this report.

3. SFY 2022-2023 VSC Activities: In addition to the recommendations included in this report, during the past two years the VSC offered advice to the Governor and to NDVS on several important matters. These included:

a) Increase resources and investments needed to reduce the incidence of suicide among veterans and their families.

b) Continue to expand outreach to veterans and their families, in partnership with Nevada's Veterans Services Organizations, to help them connect to needed benefits and resources.

c) Encourage the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to proceed quickly with the creation of the Elko Burial Grounds / Elko County National Cemetery.

4. 2022 VSC Recommendations

a) The recommendations below were discussed and approved by the VSC. Recommendations are listed in priority order.

b) Recommendations included in the VSC's 2022 Report to the Governor and Legislature are annotated with the words, "Carry over Recommendation."

TOP Ten Recommendations in Order of Priority:

Recommendation 1: Construct and Operate veterans adult day health care facilities. Prior to 2018, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) did not reimburse states for providing this care to veterans. The VA now provides reimbursement that will make establishing an Adult Day Healthcare facility more feasible to offer these much-needed services to Nevada's aging veterans and their spouses. A study is being initiated to determine requirements and initial funds needed to open an Adult Day Healthcare facility.

Recommendation 2: Nevada should create and support employment regulation and licensure reciprocity programs for U.S. Armed Forces members who are departing the military or have departed the military, to facilitate the ability of professionals, including military spouses, to work across state lines by enacting occupational licensure interstate compacts. Military spouse unemployment and underemployment continue to persist despite legislative and community efforts. With military families moving an average of once every three years, military spouses in licensed occupations must undertake the costly and time-consuming process of obtaining a new license every time they PCS across state lines. The VSC recommends the expansion of Military Spouse Employment and Reciprocity Programs.

Recommendations to the Governor and the Nevada Legislature as prepared by the Veterans Services Commission (VSC)
February 15, 2024

Recommendation 3: Reduce or eliminate business license fees for veteran owned businesses. Over the past few legislative sessions, some action has been taken to support veteran owned businesses. The commission believes that supporting these new business owners is a win for our veterans, and a win for the state who welcomes responsible, innovative, and hard-working veterans into the Nevada business community.

Recommendation 4: Consider offering a weekend burial option at Nevada State Veterans Memorial Cemeteries. Currently, interments at the Southern and Northern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemeteries are only offered on weekdays. Many local families traveling from other locations are unable to take time off during the week for burial services. Offering a weekend option would help support families wishing to inter their loved ones at the State cemeteries.

Recommendation 5: Create property tax/vehicle tax exemption categories for all veterans. The VSC recommends expansion of tax exemptions for veterans. Current exemptions favor combat veterans. While it is appropriate to honor those veterans who risked their lives in combat, all veterans placed themselves at risk when they put on the uniform of their nation; prepared to serve wherever and whenever directed to do so.

Recommendation 6: Eliminate the fees for spouse interment at State Veterans Memorial Cemeteries. While the VA does not reimburse states for interring spouses of veterans, spouses are buried at no charge at Federal veterans' cemeteries and at some state veterans' cemeteries. The VSC recommends that the spouses of our veterans, whose contributions are incalculable, are interred at no cost. A cost estimate has been completed by NDVS for this service.

Recommendation 7: Continue funding the Adopt-a-Vet Dental care program. The Adopt-a-Vet Dental Care Program provides equipment and supplies to dentists and their staff who provide their services free to veterans who are not eligible for VA services and cannot afford other dental care. This program fills a critical gap in services.

Recommendation 8: Create and expand programs to support isolated veterans, to include homebound, incarcerated, rural, Native American, and veterans in care facilities and create specific programs targeting these at-risk populations. While outreach has dramatically increased over the past decade, more work remains. NDVS should increase the use of information technology solutions such as mobile video-teleconferencing devices.

Recommendation 9: Recommend that the Governor appoint two at large VSC members who are (1) a Native American veteran and a (2) Gold or Blue Star Family member. By Statute the Governor appoints two members to the VSC who are representatives of the general public. The VSC recommends that one of these members be filled by a member of the Gold Star or Blue Star family members and one by a veteran who is a Native American. We believe that

Recommendations to the Governor and the Nevada Legislature as prepared by the Veterans Services Commission (VSC)
February 15, 2024

candidates with these qualifications can best advise the Nevada Department of Veterans Services, State of Nevada Legislators, and the Governor regarding issues affecting their constituencies.

Recommendation 10: Nevada licensing boards should ensure that existing licensure policies, especially those specific to veterans and their spouses, are listed on board websites and applications.

5. Conclusion: This report and its recommendations align with the VSC's duty to advise the Governor, Nevada Legislature, and the NDVS Director. The VSC believes that through reports such as this, it can continue to make important contributions to improving service to Nevada's service members, veterans, and their families. It is in the pursuit of this goal that the VSC submits this report for consideration ahead of the next Legislative Session.


Chairman Mike Musgrove
Nevada Veterans Service Commission

Enclosure A: 2022-2023 VSC Agendas and Minutes

Enclosure B: VSC Commissioner Biographies