



Vietnam Veterans of America Southwest Montana Chapter 788

"Never Again Will One Generation of Veterans Abandon Another"



Delegate Report
2021 VVA National Convention
Greensboro, North Carolina

Overview

The biennial VVA National Convention took place in Greensboro, North Carolina from November 2nd through the 6th, 2021. On the first day 526 delegates attended with 695 in attendance on the last day. There were 29 delegates from Region 8 which includes 9 from Montana. VVA Southwest Montana Chapter 788 sent seven delegates representing the Montana State Council, Hamilton Chapter 938, and Southwest Montana Chapter 788. Billings Chapter 334 and Helena Chapter 626 were also represented:

Chuck Renevier, Montana State Council
Larry Phillips, Montana State Council
Chris Warren, 626
Bev Stewart, 334
Mason Grahl, 938
Jim Korth, Chapter 938
Skip Lee, 788
Steve Holland, 788
Laura Alley, 788

The overall Convention was a great success and well organized. Effective health protocols were in place providing a safe and productive environment. All the delegates should be proud of their joint efforts in a job well done. The majority of the delegates from all 50 states served their members in the best interests of their Chapters.

The keynote speaker for the opening session was Lt. General (Ret) Ronald Ray Blunck, D.O. On Friday, Denis McDonough, Secretary of Veterans Affairs addressed the Convention.

The convention is a highly structured legislative body governed by Robert's rules of order. A professional parliamentarian was on hand to advise participants on the rules. The primary focus of the convention is to consider and act on proposed constitutional amendments (See Appendix I), proposed resolutions and resolution changes (See Appendix II) and to conduct elections for Officers and Directors for a two year term (See Appendix III). The typical day began at 0800 hours and ended around 2100 hours.

During the session 10 amendments to the constitution and 31 resolutions were proposed by committee. We have a copy of all and will provide them to anyone interested.

The amendments and resolutions are presented and discussed in a wide range of committee meetings and are then presented to the delegates during convention sessions for discussion, amendments and action.



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Here are a few interesting items from Committee and other meetings:

Agent Orange Dioxin

- No research has been done since 2019. Study concerns children and grandchildren of Exposed Vietnam Vets. Results : Demands by the VVA that the US Congress and the VA Initiate & support an independent health study on Vets and their offspring to determine the Effects of exposure from dioxins. To assure proper implementation of Agent Orange Act of 1991.
- Petitions signed and delivered to the Sec. of The VA for continued reclassification of dioxins effecting Vets. (Note: A very comprehensive session, which was well received!)

Jobs in the Public Sector

- Discussion of veterans opportunities the public sector. Opportunities for small business start up. Afghan/Iraqi Vets have the lowest unemployment rate of all vets.

Miscellany

- 60% of the boots on the ground volunteered to go to Vietnam
- 70% of Western Asia veterans (post 9/11) have college degrees
- 17% of the wounded in Vietnam died vs 9% from Iraq/Afghanistan
- The number of amputations in Vietnam 5283
- The response time on a Medevac in Vietnam was 16 minutes, in Iraq/Afghanistan in was 7 minutes.

National Officers and Directors were elected for two year terms. See Appendix III for results.

Chuck Renevier and Steve Holland attended the initial meeting of the newly seated Board of Directors. A number of routine initial actions were taken by the board but one issue and motion is particularly interesting. The new president, Jack McManus, initiated a new motion to look into the creation of the Vet VOA and to report back to the Board. Sam Brick, the newly elected President of the Conference of State Council Presidents, was asked to send the approved motion to the Conference of State Council Presidents. It is included as Appendix IV for your information.

An "unofficial" benefit to attending the conference was the opportunity to talk with delegates from chapters and states from the entire nation. Interacting with our peers afforded us the opportunity to learn what other chapters are concerned about and to hear about their programs and efforts.

The next convention is scheduled in August, 2023 in Orlando, Florida.



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Appendix I – Constitution

During the session 10 amendments to the constitution were passed out of the Constitution Committee, 6 of which were adopted. Four of the amendments dealt with providing authority for internet/electronic based meetings. Proposed amendment #1 covered National, State and Local meetings. It's passage mooted proposed amendments 2, 3, 8, and 10 because they would have resulted in redundancies. In addition, 9 proposed amendments were not passed out of committee, none of which were brought to the floor.

Proposed Amendments

1. Add Section 3 – Electronic Meetings. **Passed**
 - a. Authorizes meetings at all levels of the Corporation.
 - b. Includes specific requirements including anonymous voting
2. Would establish authority for internet/electronic National Board meetings. **Moot, Not Considered**
3. Would establish authority for internet/electronic National Board meetings. **Moot, Not Considered**
4. Creates authority and requirement that minutes of meetings of the National Board and National Conventions in electronic files that are appropriately backed-up. **Passed**
5. Corrects a Section reference error that has existed in the constitution for a long time. **Passed**
6. Revises requirements for scheduling the biennial National Convention giving the National Board more flexibility in scheduling, including the possibility of holding the “odd year” convention in the following calendar year.
7. Would eliminate placing candidates for office on the ballot “from the floor” during conventions. **Failed**
8. Would establish authority for internet/electronic State Council meetings. **Moot, Not Considered**
9. Reduces the number of members in good standing from 25 to 15 to petition for a chapter charter. **Passed**
10. Would establish authority for internet/electronic Chapter meetings. **Moot, Not Considered**



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Appendix II - Resolutions

Resolutions were presented and discussed in Committee meetings. Because many of the meetings were simultaneous it was not possible for each delegate to attend more than three meetings. However, as a group we were able to attend all but one committee meeting and then report the discussion to the Montana delegation.

- Agent Orange/Dioxin Committee
 - Proposed Resolution 15: Petition Congress and the President to include Hypertension to the list of presumptive diseases associated to Agent Orange.
 - **Passed**
- Government Affairs Committee
 - Proposed Resolution 7: Offered for retirement. The continuing resolution called to amend the eligibility dates for the Vietnam Service Medal to include the period between March 28, 1973 and April 29, 1975. This effort was successful allowing for the retirement of the resolution.
 - **Passed**
 - Proposed Resolution 11: Prohibits VVA Officers and Board from changing the organization's name and/or creating any new veteran's organization to replace our current one; thus making us a "last person standing" organization.
 - **Passed**
- Membership Affairs Committee
 - Proposed Resolution 8: VVA should allow our Korean Vietnam American Veterans brothers to become full fledged members. (Koreans that fought with us in Vietnam who are now US citizens.) Note: Implementation likely will require federal legislation, see proposed resolution 4.
 - **Passed**
- Minority Affairs Committee
 - Proposed Resolution 4: Use VVA resources to support HR 5590 (Korean American Valor Act) currently in congress's ion all committee which would establish healthcare benefits for South Korean Vietnam Veterans who are now US citizens.
 - **Passed**
- POW/MIA Committee
 - No Proposed Resolutions
- Public Affairs Committee
 - Proposed Resolution 12: Affirms VVA commitment to all Veterans of military service to the USA and endorses the S.A.F.E Program (Salute Armed Forces Everyday Program)
 - **Passed**



Vietnam Veterans of America Southwest Montana Chapter 788

"Never Again Will One Generation of Veterans Abandon Another"



- Veterans Benefits Committee
 - Proposed Resolution 13: VVA to 1) Work with the Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and Congress to ensure that proper training, resources and time is provided to examiners employed or contracted by the VA and 2) Work with BVA, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and Congress to promote policies that hold examiners and contractors scheduling companies accountable for inadequate examinations.
 - **Passed**
 - Proposed Resolution by the Committee (no number): Improved quality and legal accuracy in VA decisions. Generally supports process improvements within the VA.
 - **Passed as amended**
 - Proposed Resolution by the Committee VB-12: First adopted in 1989 resolution is to work to reverse a 2004 act of Congress that added an unfair practice in determining disability compensation.
 - **Passed**
- Women Veterans Committee
 - Proposed Resolution by the Committee WV-2: First adopted in 1983 resolution that VVA will continue advocacy to secure appropriate facilities and resources for the diagnosis, care and treatment of women veterans at all DVA hospitals, clinics and Vet Centers. Action amends the resolution to remove sections that are no longer needed and to add new requirements.
 - **Passed**
 - Proposed Resolution by the Committee WV-5: First adopted in 2009 titled Women Veterans Research. Resolution removes unneeded section and adds substance abuse language.
 - **Passed**
 - Proposed Resolution by the Committee WV-6: First adopted in 2009 titled Women Veterans and Veterans Benefits. Resolution strikes language that is no longer needed.
 - **Passed**
 - Proposed Resolution by the Committee WV-8: First adopted in 2013 titled Military Sexual Trauma (MST). Resolution inserts language reflecting recent studies and calls for an increase of Victim Advocate and other resources; and calls for perpetrators found guilty of Sexual Assault/Sexual Harassment to be removed from service and not transferred to another assignment.
 - **Passed**
- Veterans Health Care Committee
 - Proposed Resolution by the Committee HC-2: First adopted in 1983 titled Veterans Health Care. This is a very long resolution, action amended the resolution for VVA to advocate "that community care criteria and referrals be fully funded within thirty days for Veterans access to care when needed under Public law 115-182, the VA Mission Act of 2018." And to advocate that "the VA must request funding in each fiscal year to full fund the Mission Act for Veterans care in the community".
 - **Passed**



Vietnam Veterans of America Southwest Montana Chapter 788

"Never Again Will One Generation of Veterans Abandon Another"



- Homeless Veterans Committee
 - Proposed Resolution by the Committee HVC-6: Resolves that VVA 1) Urges the VA, Homeless Grant and Per Diem Program provide payment for services rather than reimbursement for transitional housing; 2) Support and seek legislation to establish Supportive Services Staffing Grants; 3) Identify best practice models of care addressing unique needs facing homeless women veterans; and 4) Continue monitoring and holding accountable entities receiving and distributing funds to vulnerable veteran families.
 - **Passed**
 - Proposed Resolution by the Committee HVC-1: First adopted in 1985 titled Homeless Veterans as a "Special Needs Population". Resolution urges the Presidential Interagency Council on Homeless to recognize homeless as veterans as a Special Needs Population. Resolution adds language directing "The committee will continue to advocate for recognizing Homeless Veterans as a Special Needs Population."
 - **Passed**
- PTSD and Substance Abuse Committee
 - No new resolutions
- Veterans Incarcerated Committee
 - No new resolutions



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Appendix III - Election Results

During evening Regional Caucuses candidates for the officer and director positions provide a 15 minute overview and Q&A session. Montana is in Region 8 and the delegates asked appropriate and pointed questions of the candidates.

Election Results

<u>President</u>	<u># of Votes</u>	
Jack McManus – MI	400	✓
John Rowan – NY	278	
<u>Vice President</u>		
Tom Burke – OH	377	✓
Jake Barsttini – PA	287	
<u>Secretary</u>		
Bill Meeks – TX	546	✓
<u>Treasurer</u>		
Linda Schwartz – CT	436	✓
Wayne Reynolds – AL	237	



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<u>National Board of Directors - Region</u>	<u>Region</u>	<u># of Votes</u>	
Skip Hochreich – MA	1	28	✓
Ted Wilkinson – PA	2	80	✓
Rosie Nance – NC	3	126	✓
Spence Davis – GA	4	42	✓
Gary Newman – FL	4	35	
John Riling – MI	5	97	✓
John Margowski – WI	6	97	✓
Dennis Andras – LA	7	36	✓
Francisco Ivarra – WA	8	26	✓
Dick Southern – CA	9	56	✓



Vietnam Veterans of America Southwest Montana Chapter 788

"Never Again Will One Generation of Veterans Abandon Another"



	<u>National Board of Directors – At Large</u>	<u># of Votes</u>	
1	Dottie Barickman – NE	482	✓
2	Charlie Hobbs – TN	443	✓
3	Sandin Wilson – MI	386	✓
4	Gumersindo Gomez – MA	347	✓
5	Merwin Stone – TX	346	✓
6	Richard Lindbeck – WI	324	✓
7	Dan Stenvold – ND	315	✓
8	Charles Montgomery – VA	312	✓
9	Dennis Howland - UT	307	✓
10	Pete Peterson – OK	306	✓
11	John McGinty – FL	275	
12	James Maddox – CA	271	
13	Joe Jennings – OH	259	
14	Jay Kalmer – VA	232	
15	Dean Dick – IL	214	
16	Jack Mattingly – KY	213	
17	Gene Crego – AZ	191	
18	Steve Mackey – CA	112	



Vietnam Veterans of America Southwest Montana Chapter 788

"Never Again Will One Generation of Veterans Abandon Another"



Appendix IV - Motion Adopted by VVA Board at its First Meeting

Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. (VVA) Board of Directors (BOD) directs creation of a select panel of inquiry consisting of the following individuals:

- Kerwin Stone
- Chuck Odum
- John Margowski

The sole purposes of this panel is determining the genesis, purposes, sequence of events that lead to the creation of the Veterans Voices of America, Inc. (VetVOA) as a possible adjunct organization of VVA.

The select panel of inquiry shall make limited independent assessments of the legitimacy of historical actions of current or former employees and officers of VVA in the events leading to the creation of VetVOA.

The VVA president shall authorize the utilization of existing FY 2022 approved budget funding and resources for the execution of duties by the select panel.

The VVA General Counsel is designated the principal VVA staff executive responsible for providing resources, directing, planning, administering and supporting this panel.

This panel of inquiry is not tasked with making determinations of wrongdoing or disciplinary actions.

If feasible, the BOD requests either agreement or consensus on recommendations of further actions required by the BOD to address any findings that require correction, revision, remedial action or approval by the BOD.

The suspense for submitting the panel's findings and recommendations to the BOD is January 9, 2022 at the scheduled BOD meeting.