

November 10, 2020

Delegate Mike Rogers Veterans' Symposium. Notes from CAPT Lynn Slepski, USPHS (Ret)

Secretary George Owens: Tomorrow is a special day. Trite to hear "Thank you for your service", then nothing for the rest of the year. The Veterans Caucus as strong as it has been. Viable, energetic and produces important legislation. Don't forget why tomorrow is important.

Delegate C.T. Wilson: These are troubling times both because of the pandemic and hyperpartisanship. We are all Americans. Abbreviated session, difficult to get anything through this year.

Delegate Carol Krimm: Women's caucus = 76 women and 8 male associate members. Each March we have Women's Veterans Day. Last year 80 participants. This year will be virtual.

Delegate Fraser-Hidalgo: Chair of the Latino Caucus. Proud to support and pay tribute to the sacrifices that veterans have made. Represents needs and advocates for Latino needs.

Dana Burl: Director of Outreach and Advocacy. Designee Suicide Commission; Balance of Continuum of Care Program. Service Animal Program. AD Spouse 12 years.

385K Veterans

52K Women Veterans 2nd largest

56K Military retirees

79.8K Disability

30K AD

18K reservists/national guard

130K veteran households with children

Key only 40% of MD veterans enrolled with VHA

MDVA Created 20 years ago

- Service and Benefits- accredited to assist and represent to USVA; DD214 repository; collocating with MVAs to increase availability; ~5K claims FY19.
- Charlotte Hall 454 beds, 286 skilled nursing; 168 assisted living; includes spouses
- Cemetery and Memorial Program; 50% of employees; 5 cemeteries; Memorials WWII, Vietnam; Korean War; Gold Star Families; War Memorial Building
- Outreach and Advocacy; reach service members, veterans and families and educate on VA benefits, resources and programs. Thousands of contacts last year. 60% cite difficulty navigating VA.
- MD Veterans Trust Fund 501c one time only help
- Co-Lead on Governor's Challenge to Prevent Service Member, Veteran and Families Suicide w/ MD Dep of Health/Behavior Health Administration

Ms. Gloria Dent. Veterans Employment Commission. US Ability Program. Rule of 2. VA consider Veterans First. Veteran-owned. If you do not have necessary tools, contact local veterans center. "We can do more if you want us to do it; or we can do less unless you help us to do it".

Brennae Brooks Board of Veteran Appeals. Long discussion of disability claims.

Brian Smith Testified on behalf of a number of Del. Brooke's bills. Board of Maryland Therapeutic Riding. Started Fee State Veterans to improve dialogue. Facebook reaches 500K monthly.

- HB 12/SB 341 Homes for Veterans of the Uniformed Services—updated language for 8 services
- HB 133- Vehicle Emissions—exempted AD deployed from mandatory emissions
- HB 236 Hunting and Fishing
- HB 349 Occupational and Professional Licensing
- HB 362/ SB 282 Maryland N.G. Expand tuition assistance from 50-100%
- HB 503/SB 391 Dependent Enrollment
- HB 506/ SB 458 Nonresident Tuition Exemption
- HB 596 Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Conflict Scholarship
- HB 646 Vehicle Registration Requires a donation of MD Trust Fund
- SB 142 Healing Hunting and Fishing Fund
- SB 294/ HB 593 Veterans Education Protection Act. Protects Service members using GI Bill education benefits from predatory practices of for-profit schools. Maryland became first State in the Nation to enact this protection.
- SB 700/ HB 766 Property Tax Credit. Includes any active duty, honorably discharged, or retired uniformed services who has a service-connected disability, regardless of age. Also applies to spouse.
- SB 417/ HB 257 Property Tax Credit for Disabled Veterans Provides a partial sliding scale, county option, between 50-99%

Question: Del. Krimm: Where are we on a 2nd Veterans Home. Secretary Owens: Located land in Sykesville, 140 acres owned by the State. Conducive to our needs. Extra land can be set aside for yet another cemetery. Working on this for 16 years.

Delegate Patterson: Will be hosting a Women Veteran Forum. Sponsored a bill to have a Women's Center at one of the colleges. New bill in 2021 session.

Question: Once you receive a decision and get a rating, if you re-file to try to obtain a higher rating, could your rating be decreased? Yes, it depends on how long you have been at that rating.

Question: If wanting to go through verification process, who should you go through. Go through Vet First or SBA. Vet First will work directly with you constantly.

Legislation Coming Up

CT Wilson

- 7 years Veterans Income Tax Check Off. Allows people to donate to the DAV
- Veterans Plate Bill donate to DAV

Conclusion—How can I help. You can seek help on an individual basis but I would recommend working with a group. They can help as force multipliers.