



Commission on Veterans Affairs



MEETING AGENDA **Tuesday, February 15, 2022** **6 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.**

Wayne Miller, Chair – Bob Koffman, Vice-Chair

Join the meeting via ZOOM

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89164255830>

If you want to call into the meeting, call 301-715-8592, use Meeting ID 891 6425 5830 followed by #. **If an attendee would like to speak during the meeting**, they can raise their hand if on video and Chair will recognize you or you can use the “hand raise” function under the reactions tab at bottom of page. If connecting via a smart phone, tablet or computer, please click on the middle of the page and the functions will be at the bottom of the page. Use the Zoom app to be able to access all functions, including raising your hand. If you are calling by phone, press *9 to raise your hand. Those calling into the meeting can press *6 to mute or unmute their phone.

6:00 Welcome, Pledge of Allegiance, Moment of Silence & POW/MIA Remembrance, Approval of January 2022 Meeting Minutes – *Wayne Miller, Chair*

6:05 Overview of 2022 Veteran Related Legislation in the Maryland General Assembly – *Bob Norton, President, Maryland Military Coalition*

7:00 Update on Women Veterans Workgroup – *Jameelah Johnson, Commissioner*

7:15 Updates

7:30 Adjourn

ADA Reasonable Accommodation: If you need a sign language interpreter or any other reasonable accommodation to participate in this meeting, please contact **betsy.luecking@montgomerycountymd.gov** or 240-418-4865.

Commission's Website – www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva
Veterans Network Directory – www.montgomerycountymd.gov/vnd



**Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs
Meeting Summary Minutes
February 15, 2022**

****MEETING WAS HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM****

I. Call to Order

Wayne Miller, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Commission on Veterans Affairs (CVA). Wayne asked for all present to say the Pledge of Allegiance. Wayne recognized prisoners of war and asked for a moment of silence for all of those who have given their lives and those who have been wounded for our country in the different conflicts in which our country has been engaged.

II. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve the January 2022 Meeting Summary Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken, and the January 2022 Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva.

III. Overview of 2022 Veteran Related Legislation in the Maryland General Assembly – Bob Norton, President, Maryland Military Coalition

[Maryland Military Coalition Handout](#)

Bob discussed the 2022 goals for the Maryland Military Coalition (MMC) listed in the handout above. Bills currently in the Maryland General Assembly associated with the goals are as follows.

- **Mental Health and Suicide Prevention**

- [HB 0293 / SB 0241 - Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services - 9-8-8 Trust Fund](#)

- Establishing the 9-8-8 Trust Fund as a special, nonlapsing fund to provide reimbursement for costs associated with designating and maintaining 9-8-8 as the universal telephone number for a national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline; requiring the Maryland Department of Health to designate 9-8-8 as the primary phone number for the State's behavioral health crisis hotline; requiring the Department by December 1 each year to report on the expenditure of funds and additional services provided by the funding; etc.

- In 2020, Federal Congress passed a National Crisis Response Line Act which creates a national 9-8-8 number for individuals who may be in crisis or at-risk to harm themselves. The federal bill requires every state to create an implementing framework as well as details on how to fund and sustain this new crisis line over time.
 - New crisis line would integrate the VA's Veterans Crisis Line along with other local crisis numbers.
 - Members of MMC have submitted written testimony and testified in person in support of this bill.

- **Veterans and Their Families**

- [HB 0167 - Commission to Establish a Maryland Women Veterans Memorial](#)

- Establishing the Commission to Establish a Maryland Women Veterans Memorial to study establishing a memorial dedicated to Maryland women veterans; and requiring the Commission to submit a preliminary report on its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by February 1, 2023, and a final report by September 30, 2023.

- MMC testified in support of this bill.

[HB 0224 / SB0148 – Property Tax Exemption – Disabled Veterans](#)

Expanding eligibility for a property tax exemption for the dwelling house of a disabled veteran to include veterans with a service connected disability of at least 80%.

- Under current law, veterans must have a 100% service-connected disability to be eligible for the property tax exemption.
- Bill imposes a local government mandate which is a directive in a bill requiring a local government unit to perform a task or assume a responsibility that has a discernible fiscal impact on the local government unit.
- Under one set of assumptions, special fund revenues may decrease by approximately \$1.2 million annually beginning in FY 2023.
- MMC is in support of this bill.

[HB 0617 - Property Tax Credit for Surviving Spouses of Fallen Service Members](#)

Authorizing the governing body of a county or municipal corporation to grant a property tax credit against the county or municipal corporation property tax imposed on the dwelling of a certain surviving spouse of a fallen service member who died while on active duty from injury or disease which was incurred in the line of duty.

- Fallen service member for any of the eight uniformed services.
- Members of MMC have submitted written testimony and testified in person in support of this bill.

[SB 0459 - Income Tax Credit – Active Duty, Retired, and Honorably Discharged Military – Housing Expenses](#)

This bill creates a nonrefundable credit against the State income tax for certain mortgage loan expenses incurred by an individual who is (1) an active duty, retired, or honorably discharged member of the U.S. Uniformed Services, the military reserves, or National Guard.

- An individual may claim the tax credit with respect to only one mortgage loan.
- Fairly long and complicated bill that does not have a fiscal note yet.
- MMC continues to review it and will send information to Betsy once the fiscal note is released.

• Several Bills Regarding Uniformed Service Retirement

Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and New Jersey do not tax uniformed services retired pay. Maryland is competing with these states to attract and retain a high quality resource of people who are leaving current service and who have security clearances and leadership experience. Most retire from the military service between the ages of 38 to 50 and most everyone goes into a second career. MMC has testified in support of three of the bills. Bob noted that the Montgomery County delegation has been very active as Delegates Eric Luedtke and Julie Palakovich Carr serve on the Revenue Subcommittee which is part of the House Ways and Means Committee.

- [HB0315 – Income Tax – Subtraction Modification – Military Retirement Income](#)

This bill expands the existing military retirement income tax subtraction modification by increasing to \$20,000 the maximum amount of retirement income that can be excluded. In order to qualify for the increased subtraction modification, the individual must be at least 55 years of age.

- [HB0317 – Income Tax – Subtraction Modification – Military Retirement Income](#)

This bill expands the existing military retirement income tax subtraction modification by exempting 100% of military retirement income from State taxation. The exemption is phased in over four years, beginning with tax year 2022.

- [HB0420 / SB0405 – Retirement Tax Elimination Act of 2022](#)

This Administration bill creates a subtraction modification against the State income tax for 100% of the income received by an individual who (1) is receiving old age or survivor Social Security benefits or (2) is at least age 65 and is not employed full time. The exemption is phased in over six years, beginning with tax year 2022. Bill submitted at the request of Governor Hogan.

- [HB0461 / SB0130 – Income Tax Subtraction Modification – Military and Public Safety Retirement Income](#)

This bill expands beginning in tax year 2022 the existing military retirement income tax subtraction modification by increasing to \$20,000 the maximum amount of retirement income that can be excluded. In order to qualify for the increased subtraction modification, the individual must be at least 55 years of age. The bill also expands the existing State subtraction modification for retired law enforcement; correctional officer; and fire, rescue, and emergency services personnel by exempting up to \$20,000 in eligible retirement income if the individual is at least 55 years of age. This expansion is phased in over two tax years beginning with tax year 2023.

- [HB 0473 / Income Tax Subtraction Modification – Military Retirement Income](#)

This bill expands the existing military retirement income tax subtraction modification by increasing to \$20,000 the maximum amount of retirement income that can be excluded. In order to qualify for the increased subtraction modification, the individual must have a permanent 100% service-connected disability as determined by the VA.

- [HB 0597 – Income Tax – Subtraction Modifications for Military and Public Safety Retirement Income \(Honoring Their Sacrifice Act of 2022\)](#)

This bill expands the existing income subtraction modifications for (1) military retirement income and (2) retired law enforcement; correctional officer; and fire, rescue, and emergency services personnel.

- **Currently Serving**

- [HB0112 / SB0230 - Health Occupations - Service Members, Veterans, and Military Spouses - Temporary Licensure, Certification, Registration, and Permitting](#)

This bill generally requires each health occupations board to issue an expedited temporary license, certificate, registration, or permit to a service member, veteran, or military spouse who meets specified requirements.

- Bill would allow a medical professional in one of the 20 health occupations who has a license from another state be able to apply for a temporary health occupation license as long as they meet certain basic requirements including a background check.
- Governor Hogan issued an Executive Order during the pandemic that waived all requirements to get a license in the health occupations in our state. This bill would make that initiative into state law.
- MMC has testified twice in support of this bill.

- [HB0008 / SB0275 - Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Establishment \(Time to Care Act of 2022\)](#)

This bill establishes the Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) program and FAMLI Fund to provide up to 12 weeks of benefits to a covered individual taking leave from employment due to specified personal and family circumstances. The weekly benefit is based on the individual's average weekly wage, subject to a cap. The FAMLI Fund consists of employer and employee contributions and pays for benefits, a public education program, and implementation and administrative costs.

- The program generally provides up to 12 weeks of benefits to a covered individual who is taking leave from employment due to caring for specified family members, the individual's own serious health condition, or a qualifying exigency arising out of a family member's military deployment.
- Contributions to the fund, which are shared equally between employers and employees, are also based on employee wages. All employers who employ at least one employee must participate in the program.
- MMC has submitted written testimony in support of this bill.
- Large advocacy network that is active and in support of this bill.

HB0497 / SB0109 – Vehicle Excise Tax – Exemption – Active Duty Military

This bill exempts from the vehicle excise tax a vehicle that was formerly titled and registered in another state by a member of the U.S. Uniformed Services who is on active duty or returning to the State from active duty.

- MMC has testified in support of this bill.
- Maryland has one of the largest number of active duty posts, bases, camps and stations of any state in the country.

Veteran Entrepreneurship

HB0400 - Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission - Hiring and Promotion Preferences - Veterans and Their Spouses PG/MC 106-22 (Prince George's County Delegation and Montgomery County Delegation)

This bill authorizes the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) to grant a hiring and promotion preference to an eligible veteran, the spouse of an eligible veteran who has a service-connected disability, or the surviving spouse of a deceased eligible veteran. An eligible veteran is a veteran of any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces who has received an honorable discharge or a certificate of satisfactory completion of military service, including the National Guard, the military reserves, the Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service, and the Commissioned Corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The bill establishes that granting this preference does not violate any State or local Equal Employment Opportunity law. The bill also repeals the requirement that certain honorably discharged veterans must receive a specified credit in competitive selection processes for appointment.

The floor was opened to questions.

Dr. Cynthia Macri, Commissioner, noted that there are many issues with outreach to communities of color and immigrant communities. The military is a much more diverse population than the civilian population with many family members not being native English speakers. One argument that could be made about fast tracking licensing, especially for mental health providers, is to be able to provide a broader range of culturally and linguistically proficient counselors. Dr. Macri has language drafted from previous testimony that she will share with Bob who will work to include it in future MMC testimony.

Jameelah Johnson, Commissioner, asked if the veteran hiring preference can be used more than once when applying for another job. Betsy said that the new state law would not apply to Montgomery County Government. The state has a separate hiring preference that only applies to state jobs. In 2009, the County passed legislation that gives a veteran hiring preference. Since then the County has hired approximately 250 veterans. The County veteran hiring preference can only be used one time. In the federal government, there is no limit to the number of times you can use the veterans' preference and there is no limit to the number of times you can apply for positions when agencies are accepting applications as a 30% or more disabled veteran. (Source: [FedsHireVets – Transitioning to Federal Employment: A Guide](#))

Wayne asked if a medically retired permanently 100% disabled veteran with less than two years of service would qualify for the reduced or no tax on military retirement income. His disability payments from the VA are federally tax exempt. Bob said that issue and the bills associated with retirement pay would need to be looked at more carefully.

Dr. Bob Koffman, Vice-Chair, asked how the Commission can keep veterans informed and updated on legislation. Bob said MMC can provide information on how to contact your local legislator in Annapolis. MMC is comprised of 19 military and veterans' groups that span the whole cross section of veterans in Maryland. The latest group to join is the National Montford Point Marine Association. MMC's last action alert generated 243 emails from around the state including 19 to Delegate Luedtke and 17 to Delegate Karr. The challenge for MMC is that younger veteran organizations only have a national online presence with no state or local communities or posts like the American Legion or Veterans of Foreign Wars with which to engage or garner advocacy support. MMC does have a social media presence with Twitter and Facebook accounts. Betsy said this Commission has to be mindful when sharing legislation information as they are a government entity. Bob

said the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) shares weekly reports on bills effecting military service members, veterans, and their families (<https://veterans.maryland.gov/state-legislation/>). MDVA will only endorse a bill if it has been created at the request of the Governor's Office of the Administration. Betsy suggested sharing MDVA's report via her email subscription list which has over 5,000 subscribers including local veteran service organizations. The Commission could also share information on the Commission's website under Commission letterhead. She noted that this Commission can take a position on a bill in the Maryland General Assembly with permission from the County's Office of Intergovernmental Relations (OIR). OIR briefs the Maryland General Assembly every Tuesday morning on bills the County has taken a position on. Betsy noted that Commissioners can testify on legislation as individuals. Commissioners cannot take a position for the Commission and all testimony has to be signed by the Chair.

Michael Subin, Commissioner, asked Betsy to follow up on scheduling a Homefront taping. It was suggested he tape an episode on legislation. It was noted that legislation moves fast given the short time session frame for the Maryland General Assembly. The episode may want to focus on overall legislation rather than individual bills and how Veterans can contact their elected officials.

Bob can be contacted by email at rfcknorton@verizon.net. MMC's Facebook page is www.facebook.com/MDMilCoalition.

IV. Update on Women Veterans Workgroup – Jameelah Johnson, Commissioner

Jameelah reported the Women Veterans Workgroup met on January 27 and had a brainstorming session. The workgroup discussed how to contact women veterans including surveys, Homefront, radio, virtual, and social media; how to connect with women veterans to let them know about the Commission; and how to receive feedback and input from women veterans to identify and determine needs and issues. One issue is creating a more inclusive environment where women are identified by their rank, there is not an assumption that the woman's husband is the one who has served, and more pictures of women veterans in VA hospitals, clinics, billboards, periodicals, and advertisements. Another issue is the pay and compensation disparities between male and female veterans. The VA needs to hire more women internal medicine physicians and OBGYNs.

Jameelah and Dr. Macri attended a virtual chronic illness training and education session that focused on creating action plans and supporting healthy habits and wellbeing. It was suggested that this framework could be promoted to women veterans. Jameelah noted that one attendee said that she would not be returning to the VA hospital after feeling dismissed and not included. It was suggested that providers be trained on women's issues and inclusion.

Jameelah and Dr. Macri also attended a women Veterans focus group hosted by MDVA Women Veterans/Inclusion Program. Only eight women veterans were in attendance for the Central Maryland focus group. The purpose of the groups was to gain an understanding of the needs of veterans in various populations in four regional areas. MDVA will be compiling the list of issues, concerns and needs identified.

The Commission discussed the possibility of erecting a women veterans memorial in Montgomery County. The Vietnam War Memorial was paid for and installed by the Department of General Services. Betsy asked if a memorial would be meaningful or if there are other opportunities or doable actions that would pay tribute to women veterans. Jameelah said she has heard from many women veterans that they would like to be recognized for their military service. Betsy noted that the Commission has a website that features profiles of Montgomery County women veterans. Several women who are featured have reached out to Betsy and indicated that they feel honored to be on that website.

Dr. Macri said equal pay and compensation for men and women veterans would be high on the list. Women are not receiving the same compensation rates or disability ratings as men for similar medical issues or diagnoses. Women also are not given the same treatment or recognition based on their experiences versus those who have served in combat. Dr. Macri said the VA recently issued a letter stating that the VA will be reviewing all disability pay rates. Wayne said the letter has become a deterrent with veterans not seeking a disability evaluation or re-evaluation.

Joanna Starling, Montgomery College, said a needs assessment of Montgomery County women veterans would be helpful.

Betsy suggested continuing this discussion at the next Commission meeting.

The Women Veterans Workgroup will meet again on March 10. The meeting is open to everyone.

V. Chair and Vice Chair Report

Wayne reported March 29 is National Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day. Gilchrist will be hosting a [Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day celebration event](#) on March 30.

Betsy reported she received negative feedback from one person regarding the Commission's veterans tribute website for Black History Month. Feedback included that the County was not recognizing the accomplishments of all black persons. Betsy explained to the individual that the County does have many events throughout the month of February is Black History Month. This Commission only honors Montgomery County veterans and military servicemembers. The Commission's enabling legislation states that it is the duty of this Commission to "assist in planning appropriate public acknowledgement of the contributions made by veterans and assist in planning commemoration activities recognizing the contributions made by veterans". Betsy added that we rely on veterans and family members to submit online tributes and profiles. She also noted that in the past she and Carly Clem, Staff, have been asked to include veterans from other counties and other states, but these tribute websites are only to honor Montgomery County residents. Betsy suggested that the Commission review its various tribute websites at a future meeting and discuss other ways that veterans can be recognized. Dr. Elwood Gray, Commissioner, suggesting highlighting veterans but not mentioning their ethnicity or race.

VI. Updates / Announcements

Betsy reported that Ride On is actively recruiting veterans for part- and full-time Ride On bus driver positions.

Anneke Vandenbroek, Commissioner, reported the Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic will be hosting a stress resiliency program for middle school students (grades 6, 7, and 8) on February 23. Family members of anyone who has ever served in the military are eligible to participate. Participants must complete a preevaluation prior to the program in order to identify if more intensive services are needed. Anneke noted that Neil Greenberger, Public Information Office, is sharing information about the program through the County's newsletter.

Betsy reported the Rockville Memorial Library will be installing a dedication plaque "To honor County residents Killed In Action in service to our Country in military conflicts since the County's founding in 1776, the Rockville Library was renamed to the Rockville Memorial Library at the request of Global War on Terror Gold Star family members and the Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs." The Library will also be installing a permanent display case to feature memorabilia. There is currently a digital display located in the lobby of the Library which has all the names and photos, if available, of all Montgomery County servicemembers that have been killed in action dating back to WWI. Howard County is currently working on developing their own list and Carly is working with staff to provide resources and information on how she was able to identify Montgomery County servicemembers.

Dr. Macri reported February 19 marked the 80th anniversary since President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, thereby legalizing the evacuation of all persons deemed a threat to national security to relocation centers. The order led to the eviction and incarceration of over 120,000 Japanese Americans throughout the 3 years following its instatement. Despite this injustice, thousands of young Japanese American men from the camps volunteered to serve in the nation's military, where they distinguished themselves with extraordinary valor in combat. The 442nd Regimental Combat Team (RCT), comprised entirely of Japanese Americans, became the most decorated unit in U.S. military history for its size and length of service. The Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, the National Park Service and the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation will mark the annual Day of Remembrance, with virtual programming from February 18 to 20, 2022, to explore the Japanese American community's struggle for recognition and redress.

Dr. Koffman reported the 2022 Military and Veterans Cultural Diversity Symposium will be held on February 22. The symposium is hosted by the Maryland Department of Health and sponsored by the University of Maryland School of Medicine.

Bob reported [SB0005 - General Provisions - Commemorative Days - Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day](#) would require the Governor to annually proclaim the fourth Thursday in March as Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day. The proclamation must urge educational and cultural organizations to observe Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day through appropriate and informative programs and activities.

Adjournment

7:30 p.m.

Next Full Commission Meeting

Tuesday, March 15, 2022, via Zoom from 6pm to 7:30pm. Please view the agenda for information on how to join the meeting. Agenda to be announced.

Respectfully submitted: Carly Clem, Administrative Specialist I; Betsy Luecking, Community Outreach Manager

Attendance

Commissioners Present: Josephine Bahn; Elwood Gray; Jameelah Johnson; Robert Koffman, Vice-Chair; Cynthia Macri; Wayne Miller, Chair; Reggie Mitchell; Scott Schlesinger; Joanna Starling; Michael Subin; Anneke Vandenbroek; Michael Wilson

Commissioners Absent: Lisa Schuster; Susan Webman

Non-Voting Congressional Representatives Present: Vikki Garcia (Congressman John Sarbanes); Ken Reichard (Senator Ben Cardin)

Non-Voting Congressional Representatives Absent: Christa Burton (Congressman Jamie Raskin); Austin Morris (Senator Chris Van Hollen)

Commission Staff Present: Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison; Carly Clem, Administrative Specialist I