



**SOUTH CAROLINA
MILITARY BASE TASK FORCE**



**VETERANS POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
GOVERNOR'S REPORT**

JUNE 11, 2018





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MILITARY BASE TASK FORCE**



To: His Excellency Henry D. McMaster, Governor of South Carolina
and
The South Carolina Military Base Task Force

Pursuant to Executive Order 2016-24 (See Schedule A) the South Carolina Veterans Advisory Committee (VPAC) held its organizational meeting on June 6, 2017. VPAC continued its monthly meetings throughout 2017 and into 2018, receiving extensive background information and recommendations from a distinguished and diverse group of presenters outlined on Schedule C. Further deliberations included a ranking of those recommendations in order to determine the perceived priority in which the findings should be addressed to achieve the most immediate benefit to the veteran community.

The committee does hereby respectfully submit the following initial findings and recommendations to the Governor and the South Carolina Military Base Task Force this the 11th day of June, 2018.

South Carolina Veterans Advisory Committee

By: _____
William L. Bethea, Jr.
Chairman



PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Establish a credible data base to obtain an accurate count of the number of veterans in the state so they can be better served.
2. Establish a comprehensive program to convince transitioning service members to remain in the state, as well as to coordinate efforts of the various agencies that help veterans with employment opportunities.
3. Create a SC Department of Veterans Affairs with cabinet rank to replace the SC Division of Veterans Affairs, and provide the Department with increased authority over County Veterans Affairs Officers.
4. Revise the current legislation covering the appointment of the county Veterans Affairs Officers from a two-year appointment to a four-year appointment. Enhance technology for County Veterans Affairs Officers and provide more state funds to be used for certification and recertification training, and to purchase needed equipment. Advocate for leeway in use of vehicles for county Veterans Affairs Officers.
5. Provide links on the Veterans Administration federal website to South Carolina Department of Mental Health (SCDMH) veteran resources, including links to SCDMH's three current VA state homes. Allow SCDMH to access VA eligibility system to determine veteran benefit status. Support the construction of three new VA state homes.
6. Raise public awareness about veterans charities fraud. Inform veterans that if they receive a solicitation from a charity or professional fundraiser and they have concerns about that organization to notify the Secretary of State's office. Notify veterans charities of existing state filing requirements for charitable registration and annual financial reports.
7. Create a data base of Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) active in the state and explore the means by which the Secretary of State can verify their legitimacy of purpose.
8. Create a central clearing house for state agencies that serve veterans within the state that advertises and coordinates all veteran support resources in the state.
9. Advocate for a tax exemption for spouses if service member dies from service connected disability.

SCHEDULE A

EXECUTIVE ORDER 2016-24

On September 26, 2016, Governor Nikki Haley established the South Carolina Veterans Policy Advisory Committee with Executive Order 2016-24. This committee shall act as an advisory committee to the South Carolina Military Base Task Force for the purpose of analyzing the contributions and needs of veterans in the state of South Carolina. In conducting its work, the Veterans Policy Advisory Committee shall solicit testimony from veterans in making policy recommendations and shall report its recommendations to the Governor and the South Carolina Military Base Task Force not less than annually.

SCHEDULE B

VPAC COMMITTEE MEMBERS

William L. Bethea, Jr, Chairman

Col (Ret) Dan Beatty

Major General (Ret) George Goldsmith

Lt General (Ret) Jack Klimp

Col (Ret) Barry Wingard

Senator Thomas McElveen

Representative Shannon Erickson

Major General Robert Livingston

Sergeant Major (Ret) Howard Metcalf

Cheryl Stanton, Director, SC Dept of Employment and Workforce

Sara Goldsby, Director, SC Dept of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services

John Magill, Director, SC Dept of Mental Health

Beverly Buscemi, Director, SC Dept of Disabilities and Special Needs

Todd Humphries, Ex Officio, President, SC Association of County Veterans Affairs Officers

SCHEDULE C

2017 VPAC PRESENTERS

Mark Hammond, Secretary of State

David Omura, Director, Dorn VA Medical Center

Dwight Bradham, VAO Aiken County

Ann Shippy, Women's Veterans Memorial

Grey Parks, Dept of Employment and Workforce

LTC Marion Bulwinkle, Director, SC National Guard Service Member and Family Care

MG Van McCarty, Deputy Adjutant General, SC National Guard

Elisabeth Kovacs, Commerce Workforce Development

John Magill, Director, Department of Mental Health

Beverly Buscemi, Director, Department of Disabilities and Special Needs

Sara Goldsby, Director, Department of Drug Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services

Stanley Foremen, Office of Veterans Affairs

James Brown, SC Veterans Advocacy Council

Ron Rhames, President, Midlands Technical College

Leanne Weldin, Regional Director, Veterans Benefit Administration

Howard Metcalf, Director, SC Veterans Affairs

Todd Humphries, President, SC Association of County Veterans Affairs Officers