



Veterans Affairs Commission  
2017 Annual Report

Meetings

The Veterans Affairs Commission quarterly meetings were held on the following dates:

January 18, June 8, September 20 and November 8.

In addition to the quarterly meetings, the Commission met to plan the April 20th VAC Expo on:

February 2, February 21, March 7, March 21, March 30 and April 12.

Membership

The Veterans Affairs Commission had 13 appointed members plus two members representing the two major military installations in Anne Arundel County - Fort George G. Meade and the Naval Support Activity - Annapolis, as follows:

John Bremer (leave-of-absence status)  
Terry Douglas  
Richard Heath  
Curtis Jones  
David Hogen  
Brian Kelm (Naval Support Activity, Annapolis)  
Karla Lathroum  
Robert Leib  
George Matthews (Fort George G. Meade)  
Paul McGuire  
Tim Mennuti (Chairman)  
Marty Michalosky  
Kathie Morrison  
Adger Stokes  
Ken Thompson

In addition, two other interested veteran attendees/call-ins at various times during the year were:  
Kathy Reents and Debra Myers.

## Accomplishments

A. The primary accomplishment of the Commission during 2017 was the planning and execution of the Anne Arundel County VAC Expo on April 20, 2017 at Annapolis High School. The Expo was very well received with several hundred veterans in attendance.

Welcoming remarks were made by the County Executive and the keynote address was provided by the Maryland Secretary of Veterans Affairs, George W. Owings III. The Expo was a “tabletop” event with 40+ veteran service and commercial organizations that serve veterans, plus classroom sessions for presentations.

Tabletop participants were in the categories of:

1. Employment
2. Disability Claims & Legal Assistance
3. Homes and Housing
4. Medical, Mental, & Behavioral Health and Counseling
5. Education
6. Multi-Service Organizations
7. Business
8. Other (ex: Travis Manion Foundation - “Character Does Matter” Program)

Classroom sessions covered the following topics:

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR VETERANS AND DEPENDENTS  
EXPUNGEMENT OF CRIMINAL RECORDS  
VA BENEFITS CLAIMS & THE APPELLATE PROCESS  
FILING DISABILITY CLAIMS  
VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM, HOUSING, EMPLOYMENT, AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH  
MILITARY DISCHARGE UPGRADES  
GETTING YOUR LEGAL AFFAIRS IN ORDER: WHAT YOU NEED AND WHY  
RESUME WRITING AND INTERVIEWING SKILLS  
TALK SAVES LIVES: AN INTRO TO SUICIDE PREVENTION

Special support for the Expo was provided by the Midshipman Action Group from USNA, the NJROTC Color Guard from Annapolis High School, MCVETS Choir, Anne Arundel County Fire and Police, Chik-fil-A, Mission BBQ, Dunkin’ Donuts, and the Anne Arundel County Alarmers Association.

B. During regularly scheduled quarterly meetings, the Commission’s Agendas included presentations by a range of Federal, state and county organizations serving veterans, useful in educating the Commissioners who are involved with outreach to county veterans. As an example, Brooks Tucker, Assistant Secretary for Veteran’s Affairs, highlighted the VA’s priorities during the current administration: focusing on a clinical-driven process, establishing accountability (including benefits claims), utilizing technology, allocating patients to match current infrastructure, and coordinating community care.

C. Attendance at various veteran-related County events.

## Proposed Initiatives for 2018

Support state legislation regarding state income tax exemption for retired veterans,

Increase participation in appropriate veteran-oriented events,

Continue support of the newly established Anne Arundel County Veterans Court,

Finalize revised Commission By-Laws,

Develop a pamphlet of VSO information for veterans lacking internet access (include AAC/Fed/State descriptions and contact info),

Investigate the need for a communications plan for distributing monthly communiqués to county VSOs, (but not to duplicate Maryland Dept of Veterans Affairs Friday email blasts),

Perform annual website review and submit updates to IT Department,

Investigate/arrange quarterly, advertised, small-scale (i.e., not Expo-sized), topically-focused workshops at various locations around the county, and

Investigate Community Veterans Engagement Boards (examples: Montgomery and Frederick Counties) and “clearinghouse” database for “Serving Together” –type initiatives.