

## MINUTES

### SENATE COMMITTEE ON VETERAN AFFAIRS & MILITARY INSTALLATIONS

Monday, July 16, 2012

1:30 PM

Temple, TX

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Pursuant to a notice posted in accordance with Senate Rule 11.10 and 11.18, a public hearing of the Senate Committee on Veteran Affairs & Military Installations was held on Monday, July 16, 2012, in Temple, TX.

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#### **MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Senator Leticia Van de Putte, Chair  
Senator Brian Birdwell, Vice Chair  
Senator Jose Rodriguez

#### **MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Senator Wendy Davis  
Senator Craig Estes

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The Chair called the meeting to order at 1:30 PM. There being a quorum present, the following business was transacted:

The Chair recognized Ben Russell, a Pearl Harbor survivor/veteran, to lead the Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Chair recognized Mark May, 9 years old, and Carter May, 7 years old, to lead the Committee in the Pledge to the Texas Flag.

The Chair called the following persons to provide invited testimony on Interim Charge 2: Review the benefits claims process for filing with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs through the Texas Veterans Commission's Claims Representation and Counseling program and make recommendations to improve the quality of life for veterans and their families. Coordinate with the Senate Finance Committee to identify and maximize funding options, reduce claims backlogs, and increase the benefits received by Texas veterans (see attached witness list).

The Chair called the following persons to provide invited testimony on Interim Charge 4: Evaluate the status of mental health services for veterans and Texas Military Forces. Include an

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assessment of peer counseling programs, "aftercare" provided for units within their local communities following a trauma within the group, and efforts to address the secondary mental health and substance abuse issues caused by post traumatic stress disorders and other combat-related disorders (see attached witness list).

At 3:46 PM Senator Birdwell assumed the chair.

At 4:00 PM Senator Van de Putte resumed the chair.

The Chair called the following persons to provide invited testimony on Interim Charge 8(c): Update on Mental Health section of the Texas Coordinating Council for Veterans Services, authorized by SB 1796, 82nd Regular Legislation Session (see attached witness list).

The Chair called the following persons to provide public testimony on Interim Charges 2, 4 and 8(c) (see attached witness list).

There being no further business, at 5:35 PM Senator Van de Putte moved that the Committee stand recessed subject to the call of the chair. Without objection, it was so ordered.

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Senator Leticia Van de Putte, Chair

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Heidi Kluber, Clerk