



Unified Arizona Veterans (UAV) Monthly Membership Meeting Minutes

Date: October 3, 2026

Time: 9:01 AM

Location: Virtual Meeting (Google Meet)

Presiding Officer: Travis Burns, IPC

Secretary: Carl Forkner

Attendees (by Google Meets) [28]: IPC Burns, Vice Chair Harris, Secretary Forkner, Treasurer Bernard, Director Yates, Director Morris, Director McDermott, Director Jameson, Director Milem, Director Baker, Chaplain Seago, Dee Person (ACMF), Karen Craig (AVHOF), Dylan D (ADVS), Exec Dir Ditter (PVAHCS), Exec Dir Lockridge (SAVAHCS), Carol Rundell, Carol Culbertson, Chris Gahan, Jeanne Blaes, Kathy Upchurch, Marlon Ruiz, M. Babcock, Nancy Fassbender, Phil Hanson, Randy Meyer, Ravyn Crescent, William Jarvis.

Excused [1]: Chair Hohman

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:01 AM by IPC Travis Burns. An invocation was delivered by Chaplain Lea Seago, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Introduction and Announcements

Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony

Members were reminded that the 2026 Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony will be held on October 23, 2026. Registration information and event logistics were discussed.

3. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

The September meeting minutes were distributed prior to the meeting. Corrections submitted regarding names referenced in the Chaplain's report were incorporated.

Motion: Approve the minutes as corrected.

Result: Approved by unanimous consent.

4. Treasurer's Report

Treasurer reported that:

- Beginning balance: Approximately \$99,000
- Hall of Fame registration revenue received
- Significant scholarship donation received from the Disabled American Veterans (DAV)
- Minor expenditures for internet security services
- Ending balance: Approximately \$141,396
- Accounts successfully reconciled with bank records

Action: Treasurer's report accepted as presented.

5. Sickness and Distress Report

Chaplain Lee Siegel reported:

- Bud Watts continues to experience significant health challenges and remains under constant care from his spouse at the Lake Havasu City hospital.
 - David Losier remains hospitalized.
 - Cards and notes of encouragement were sent to both individuals.
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6. Agency and Partner Updates

Arizona Department of Veterans' Services (ADVS)

Representative Dylan Dell provided updates on:

- Leadership participation in discussions supporting veterans involved in ranching and rural communities.
- Fourth anniversary celebration of the Yuma Veterans Home.
- Upcoming Halloween Carnival at the Tucson Veterans Home.
- Annual Veterans Benefits Counselor training conference.
- Upcoming Stand Down events:
 - Lake Havasu City: October 17
 - Navajo County: October 23
 - Pinal County: November 21

Members were encouraged to utilize Veteran Benefits Counselors for claims and benefits assistance.

Southern Arizona VA Health Care System

Director Leslie Lockridge reported:

Veteran Services

- VBA representatives will be available onsite October 14 to assist with benefits and claims.
- Virtual Veterans Healthcare Update scheduled October 14.
- Drive-through flu shot clinics scheduled throughout October.
- Breast Cancer Awareness resource event scheduled October 22.

Construction Projects

- Building 80 clinic renovation progressing.
- Emergency Department expansion underway, adding approximately 8,000 square feet.
- Mental Health Building renovation remains on schedule for completion in November 2026.

Outreach and Community Engagement

- Successful 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony.
- Unsheltered veterans outreach event held September 18.
- Homeless Summit hosted with community leaders.
- Hispanic Heritage Month celebration and car show.
- POW/MIA Recognition Ceremony conducted with community partners.
- Native American outreach activities continued throughout Southern Arizona.
- Medical readiness partnership activities conducted with Davis-Monthan Air Force Base.

Workforce Development

- Active recruitment efforts continue utilizing expedited hiring initiatives.

Discussion occurred regarding volunteer onboarding and the importance of Real ID documentation during the credentialing process.

Phoenix VA Health Care System

Director Elijah Ditter reported:

FY2026 Accomplishments

- Record 126,000 unique veterans served.
- Approximately 1.8 million clinical encounters completed.
- More than 40,000 bed days of care provided.
- 91% veteran trust score achieved.
- Maintained five-star quality ratings.

Construction and Facilities

- Campus roof replacement projects underway.
- New infusion clinic project progressing.
- Expansion of services at the 32nd Street Clinic.
- Women's dedicated Primary Care Team established.

Upcoming Programs and Events

- Veggies for Veterans community events.
- Military branch birthday celebrations.
- Phoenix Public Library Bookmobile event.
- White Cane Safety Day.
- Community Mental Health Summit.
- National Family Caregiver Month activities.
- Women's Veterans Midlife Resource Expo.
- Annual "VetsGiving" event scheduled for November 14.

Fisher House Project

- Project signage installed.
 - Utility and site preparation planning underway.
 - Anticipated timeline for site preparation and infrastructure work remains 12-18 months once contracts are awarded.
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Northern Arizona VA Health Care System

Updates included:

- Appointment of an Interim Associate Director for Patient Care.
 - Flu and COVID vaccination initiatives.
 - Veteran stand downs and outreach activities.
 - Housing expansion projects at Fort Whipple.
 - Creative Arts Festival participation opportunities.
 - Continued outreach to rural and tribal communities.
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Arizona Coalition for Military Families (ACMF)

Highlights included:

- Growth of the Be Connected initiative statewide.
 - Community training and connector programs.
 - Veteran support webinars.
 - Upcoming annual symposium and professional development opportunities.
 - Continued use of data-informed strategies for veteran services. [
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7. UAV Board of Directors Report

Secretary Carl Forkner reported on the recent Board of Directors meeting:

Financial and Organizational Updates

- Hall of Fame induction planning continues.
- Scholarship Endowment Fund received notable donations:
 - DAV Arizona Department: \$30,000
 - Shamrock Foundation: \$5,000
 - Additional private donations received.

Communications

- Improved communication systems implemented to broaden outreach while reducing costs.

DAV Outreach Program

- Six remote service offices currently operating.
 - Nearly 400 claims completed during the year.
 - Expansion planned to 20 rural and reservation-based service locations throughout Arizona.
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8. New Business

DAV Southern District Liaison

Bill Jarvis, Commander of DAV Chapter 39, accepted appointment as Southern District Liaison and will coordinate activity among chapters in Southern Arizona.

9. Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame Update

Chair Reggie Yates provided the following updates:

- Induction Ceremony scheduled for October 23, 2026.
 - Governor Katie Hobbs is expected to attend.
 - Nineteen veterans will be inducted.
 - Registration closes October 11, 2026.
 - Venue capacity approximately 600 attendees.
 - Digital check-in process will be implemented.
 - Attendees should identify ADA accommodations, dietary restrictions, and seating requests during registration and check-in.
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10. Good of the Order

Secretary Carl Forkner provided a comprehensive update of DAV's Native American and Rural Veteran Outreach Program:

Home Base Partnership

- New collaboration established with Home Base, Massachusetts General Hospital, and the Boston Red Sox Foundation.

- Tele-mental health services will begin serving rural and Navajo veterans in November.

Expansion Activities

- Additional outreach sites being established across Arizona.
- Upcoming benefits counseling and claims assistance events scheduled on the Navajo Nation.
- Transportation resources being provided through vehicle donations.
- Additional office facilities and support infrastructure secured through community partnerships.

The program continues to focus on reducing veteran suicide and improving service accessibility in rural and tribal communities.

Phoenix Cold War Memorial Project

Christopher Gahan reported:

- Construction remains on schedule.
- Completion anticipated February 2027.
- Ribbon-cutting ceremony planned for March 2027.
- More than 100 commemorative pavers have been sold.
- Additional pavers remain available for purchase.

Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame Society

Karen Craig reminded members that nominations are being accepted for the Patriot Award program recognizing businesses, organizations, and individuals supporting Arizona veterans. Deadline for nominations is October 31, 2026.

11. Closing Remarks

IPC Travis Burns thanked all attendees and highlighted the continued importance of collaboration among Arizona's veteran-serving organizations. He emphasized the value of mentorship, community engagement, and continued service to veterans across the state.

12. Benediction and Adjournment

Chaplain Lea Seago delivered the benediction.

The meeting concluded following the Flag Salute at approximately 10:07 AM.

Respectfully submitted,



Dr. Carl B. Forkner
AVHOF Class of 2025
Secretary