

2009 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COMMISSION FOR VETERANS

Honorable Jack B. Johnson and distinguished Members of the County Council, I have the honor to submit for your study the report of the Prince George's County Commission for Veterans, established by Council Bill 17-2006.

As the Commission for Veterans commences its second full year of service to the veteran's community I have the distinct honor of reporting on our activities which have taken place in the past 12 months during its first year of existence. Our Commission has been involved in a wide range of veteran oriented activities reflecting of course that Prince George's County is home to more veterans (77,000 plus) than any other subdivision in the State of Maryland. Both our needs and our numbers reflect this fact. We have established both short and long term goals to help address the many needs of our Veterans within the County (enclosure 1).

Our Commission hosted a veteran's night attended by approximately 150 veterans from across the County who heard remarks by Prince George's County Senators Ulysses Currie and Douglas J.J. Peters. The former is chair of the powerful Senate Budget and Taxation and the latter is co-chair of the Veteran's Legislative Caucus. The Lieutenant Governor's office was represented by the Hon. Wilbert Forbes who provided veterans with information on available services and benefits available through the State. In addition, the Commission has provided our Veterans with the opportunity to hear from numerous Veterans Affairs office from the State, Federal government, and from the Charlotte Hall Veterans Home during our monthly meetings.

All of our subcommittees were involved in a wide range of activities. Our Legislative Committee chaired by Commissioners Glynn E. Parker and Elbert White represented our Commission in Annapolis in the 2009 session at the General Assembly on an extended range of legislative proposals as well as before the Congress of the United States with considerable success and was part of a successful lobbying effort to obtain advanced funding of the budget of the Veterans Administration. Under Commissioner

Parker's direction letters were sent to our legislative representatives at the national and state level outlining our position on many topics of interest to the veteran community. Two of those topics were the proposal to enact a subtraction modification to the state income tax state which would exempt veteran's receiving retirement pensions from paying Maryland Income Tax and a bill to permit veteran's posts to operate up to five slot machines per post to help support their operations. (enclosure 2)

Our Commission was well represented at ceremonies of all kinds across the state including the ground breaking ceremony of the VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic on Fort Detrick, MD which we hope to see as the forerunner of a similar facility at Andrews Air Force Base in our own county. Our Veterans Benefits and Services Committee (enclosure 3), chaired by Commissioner Robert T. West was involved in numerous efforts to catalogue the needs of Prince George's County veterans and to bring veterans the service to which they are entitled and vice versa. The goal of the subcommittee is to determine the needs of veterans in Prince George's County by creating a list of sources at all levels of government and to match each veteran's entitlements with the appropriate governmental agencies. All this will be a forerunner to extended legislative efforts in many areas. Specifically this subcommittee created a survey to compile important Veteran data. The survey is available at the Department of Family Services and on this Commission's website developed this year as the brain child of Jermoni Dowd who has been a valued asset for the Commission.

As Chairman of the Commission, Henry Turner, Jr. represented the Commission at numerous Veterans events throughout the County delivering the keynote address at many of them. He spoke at the City of Bowie and City of Greenbelt Veterans' ceremonies as well as at the American Legion in Glenarden. He has identified over 1,200 vacant housing units in the Summerfield project located next to the FEDEX stadium that are currently leased by the Department of Defense (DoD) until 2015. Chairman Turner and the Commission are working with elected County, State, and Federal government officials to help determine a plan with DOD and Hunt Development Group on how best to utilize these vacant houses to house homeless Veterans and their families as well as county residents losing their homes. Redevelopment of the site to

provide veterans with work opportunity and a Veterans Benefit and Service Training Center is also being discussed.

A special thanks is due to Commissioner Frederick Nordhorn, a Native American, who has been an Ambassador of good will for the Commission in both the Native American community and in the larger community as well. Thanks to him, Commission members and increasingly the general public as well are learning that of all America's minority groups the Native Americans have the highest percentage of veterans. Diversity is what our Commission is all about and Commissioner Nordhorn's tireless efforts have gone far to make that a reality.

Three of our members Vice Chair Gerard Devlin, Commissioner Robert West and Secretary Raymond Chatary have launched a monthly Veterans Forum on Bowie Cable TV which is available nationally through youtube.com. Chairman Henry Turner along with Vice-Chair Gerard Devlin were both interviewed on the Forum. Many of our Commissioners double in brass as members of other organizations; Commissioners Martel, West, Lambird, Devlin, Parker and Secretary Chatary are all members of the Joint Veterans Committee of Maryland where they represent various nationally chartered veterans' organizations. Members of the Commission are uniquely able to reach out to the veteran's community

Commissioner Powell led the Commission in donating numerous school supply bags with school supplies to the District 8 Day Ceremony. Chairman Henry Turner along with Commissioners Tony Begenwald and Fred Nordhorn participated with Councilwoman Ingrid Turner in the distribution of additional school bags and supplies to two schools in the City of Bowie as our Veterans' children are part of the community. Several articles were published in local newspapers on Veterans and events occurring throughout the County. One of those articles was written by Commissioner Powell for the Gazette Newspaper, entitled Still waiting on "gift" for vet, published September 25, 2008, explaining the needs, concerns, and Quality of Life for our Veterans and Families and how they have been neglected.

Maryland's Deputy Secretary of Veteran's Affairs, Wilbert Forbes, has been a frequent attendee at our Commission meetings and has worked to build bridges between veteran's activities at the state and local level. He has taken an active role in assisting all our efforts. The Commission has received excellent staff support from Ms Patricia Morris, Director of the Department of Family Services. I would be remiss if I did not mention the yeoman work of Secretary Raymond A. Chatary who has been the glue which has kept the Commission functioning as well as it has.

Respectfully submitted,

HENRY C. TURNER, JR.

Chairman
Commission for Veterans
Prince George's County

Commission members:

Henry C. Turner, Jr, Chair
Gerard F. Devlin, Vice Chair
Alfreda M. Alexander
Anthony J. Begenwald
Robert J. Lambird
Andre R. Martel
Stanley R. Murphy
Frederick H. Nordhorn
Glynn E. Parker
Beverly Y. Phillips
Regina A. Powell
Robert T. West
Elbert D. White

Public Member
Public Member
Disabled American Veterans
Marine Corps League
Military Order of the Purple Heart
American Veterans (AMVETS)
Vietnam Veterans of America
Public Member
Disabled American Veterans
Women's Army Corps Veterans
Public Member
Veterans of Foreign Wars
American Legion

Raymond A. Chatary (Secretary- nonvoting Commission Member)

