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COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE FOR AMERICA'S VETERANS

E-Newsletter: VOL 1, NO 1

A MESSAGE FROM HARRY N. WALTERS, MANAGING COMMISSIONER

Dear Friends:

Thank all of you who have joined us in support of the vitally important work of the Commission on the Future for America's Veterans. To keep you better informed about the activities of the Commission, we are instituting with this first edition, a regular e-Newsletter and I encourage you to share it with others who may be interested in our work.

The recent revelations about Walter Reed Army Medical Center underscore the point that we have been making for months: the systems in place today to care for our returning soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines need to be transformed. While there can and must be immediate "fixes" made to improve the care for our veterans today, it is more clear than ever that the mission of our Commission – to design a system capable of meeting veterans needs 20 years in the future – is more important than ever.

The Commission has already gotten a great start on this mission, with successful meeting sessions in Washington, DC last November, in Charleston, WV, in January and in Tampa, FL just two weeks ago. Over the next 15 months, the Commission will continue holding meetings, conducting independent research, and preparing recommendations and a plan of action to deliver to the President, the Congress, and the American public by Memorial Day 2008.

As you know, this Commission is a private, independent, and self-funded body, which makes it imperative that we continue to gather the support necessary to fulfill our mission. Your counsel and active assistance in moving this forward will be crucial both now and as we continue over the coming months.

In addition to this e-Newsletter, I encourage you to regularly check our web site, www.future4vets.org, which contains the latest information about the Commission's activities and other important veterans' news. Also, please feel free to contact me anytime by email at HWalt35553@aol.com or on my cell phone at (202) 285-9847. If you can't get me right away, you can always contact John McGinn, our External Liaison via email at: JJMcginn@aol.com.

I look forward to the journey ahead and appreciate very much having you aboard.

Very sincerely,



Harry N. Walters
Managing Commissioner

CONVERSATIONS ON THE FUTURE

The Commission is currently engaged in a national activity entitled “Conversations on the Future for American’s Veterans” for the purpose of seeking input from military veterans, veterans’ experts, and other Americans interested in these issues. The “Conversation” began in a town hall meeting at the State Capital in Charlestown, West Virginia in January 2007, and a great start it was. West Virginia’s veterans and political leaders packed the State House Chamber for the Commission’s “ Town Hall Meeting” (<http://future4vets.org/wordpress/conversations-on-veterans-future-begin-in-west-virginia>) to share their views on what veterans deserve and will need decades from now. West Virginia’s Governor Joe Manchin, the State’s Adjutant General of the National Guard, the WV Secretary of Military Affairs, the WV Director of Veterans Affairs, as well as West Virginia business leaders and United Mine Worker National President (and Vietnam veteran) Cecil Roberts all addressed the Commission. National Executive Directors from The American Legion, VFW, DAV, AMVETS and PVA also made the trek from Washington to help kick off the “Conversation” in Charleston.

COMMISSION VISIT TO TAMPA IN MARCH

The Commission traveled to Tampa, Florida March 13 to 15 to conduct visits to VA facilities, as well as hold another round of meetings to discuss and deliberate how to redesign the system. Among the stops were visits to the Bay Pines VA Nursing Home and the James Haley VA Medical Center Polytrauma Center and Spinal Cord Injury Center. The Commission heard from patients, staff and administrators at these facilities about the problems of today, the needs of tomorrow, and how to design a system to meet those needs in the future. The Commission also held a Town Hall meeting to bring Florida veterans together to discuss their needs for the future. Admiral Leroy Collins, Florida State Director of Veterans Affairs was on hand, along with a number of representatives from lawmakers to kick off the high profile meeting. Numerous television cameras and news reporters were on hand to document the event. The meeting was also web cast over the Internet and dozens of interested veterans availed themselves of the opportunity.

BUILDING SUPPORT FOR THE COMMISSION

Over the past weeks, Managing Commissioner Harry Walters and Executive Director David Sevier had the opportunity to speak to thousands of veterans attending Washington conferences of The American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), and Jewish War Veterans. Harry was also invited to make presentations to the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs and the National Association of State Veterans Homes. In the coming weeks, Harry and David are scheduled to speak to the AMVETS and other groups. The message they have been sharing about what the Commission is doing has been enthusiastically received at each event, and the wave of support for the Commission is clearly on the rise.
