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**Overview for the Comprehensive Veterans Legislative Reform Report**

**Introduction**

This report fulfills the requirements of Nevada Revised Statutes 417.0195, which requires the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs (ICVA) to “submit a report concerning the activities of the Council during the preceding calendar year and any recommendations of the Council to the Governor and the Director of the Legislative Counsel Bureau” by February 15 of every year. It includes policy recommendations from various temporary policy councils, as well as recommendations from the veteran community and the Nevada Department of Veterans Services. It also provides several important studies, which were provided by an independent third party and are relevant to the policy discussion associated with this publication.

**Executive Order Period**

The ICVA was established through Executive Order 2012-15 by Governor Brian Sandoval. Through this order, the ICVA was directed to work to identify and prioritize the needs of Nevada’s veterans, work toward increasing the coordination of the State government’s efforts to meet the needs of veterans with the federal, local, and non-profit services, and to deliver a report to the Governor by the end of 2013.

Regarding the prioritization of needs, the ICVA worked in conjunction with the Green Zone Initiative to develop a formal priority list. In order to address the priorities as fully as possible, though, it first developed an environmental scan to determine the gaps and overlaps in existing services throughout the state. Over 100 stakeholders were surveyed for this environmental scan, resulting in a better understanding of what are seen as the biggest challenges, barriers, and opportunities with respect to serving veterans in Nevada.

Once the needs were identified, the ICVA assisted in developing prioritized recommendations for improving Nevada’s services to veterans. Beyond these priorities, the ICVA also provided input for and improved upon the broader rationale for why Nevada should do more to coordinate services to Nevada’s veterans. These recommendations and the additional rationale can be found within the published business case approved by the ICVA.

The final portion of the ICVA’s initial recommendations is a Veterans Services Funding Analysis. The purpose of the funding analysis is to identify public funding streams that support veterans issues in Nevada and to also offer a comparison with several other neighboring states, including Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah. Through this study, the ICVA was able to understand how veterans resources are currently used and to also see opportunities for additional grant opportunities that could be pursued in the future. These reports make up the bulk of the ICVA’s efforts to date.

**Statutory Period**

The recommendations developed by the ICVA during the Executive Order period led to several important successes. One such success was the passage of Assembly Bill 58 during the 77th Legislative Session, which, among other things, created the ICVA as a permanent body in statute. The member composition and duties of the ICVA remained the same as during the previous period, including a requirement to provide a report to the legislature in February of every year.
In order to fulfill this reporting requirement, the ICVA decided to move forward in two distinct directions. First, it would develop strategic goals in line with each of the strategic priorities developed through the Governor’s strategic planning framework. Second, it would work to develop policy recommendations around the three focus areas of the Green Zone Initiative—employment, wellness, and education—ahead of the 78th legislative session.

Pursuant to the Nevada Revised Statutes, the ICVA provided a report to the Legislative Commission in February of 2014. Instead of providing legislative recommendations in that report, it opted instead to use the rest of 2014 to develop comprehensive recommendations for reform. These recommendations were envisioned to cut across all layers and segments of Nevada’s social service networks in order to improve all outcomes for service members, veterans, and their families.

The effort for comprehensive veterans legislative reform was greatly assisted by Governor Sandoval declaring 2014 to be the “Year of the Veteran” in Nevada. During this time, and the time leading up to this proclamation, the Governor signed several executive orders creating various other short-term policy councils around specific service areas or veteran demographics. During 2014, these groups met, created reports and recommendations, and published their reports mostly by May 1, 2014.

Because of this robust policy development effort, Nevada now has a deeper understanding of veteran services, challenges and opportunities, and the policy recommendations that can improve outcomes. It is important to point out that nearly all of these policy councils recognized the importance of gathering, sharing, and synthesizing data on veteran outcomes, and they made recommendations accordingly. If these recommendations are accepted, then Nevada will be able to measure the effectiveness of these recommendations and the ICVA can offer more sophisticated policy recommendations in the future as well.

*Report Contents*

This report begins with an overview of Nevada’s Green Zone Initiative (GZI). This initiative has focused on marshalling all of the available resources for Nevada’s service members, veterans, and their families in order to improve outcomes. Also included is a lengthy list of successes associated with the Green Zone Initiative, the Nevada Department of Veterans Services, the “Year of the Veteran” in Nevada, the ICVA, and other related veteran activities in the state. The GZI successes are followed by a brief overview of the GZI action plan for 2015.

Various reports from several policy councils are included in this report, and several represent the three focus areas of the Green Zone Initiative. The Student Veterans Advisory Council prepared a report and recommendation regarding veteran education issues; the Veteran Suicide Prevention Council prepared a report and recommendation regarding veteran wellness, and specifically, decreasing suicide among Nevada’s veteran and military populations; and the ICVA prepared a report and recommendation regarding veteran employment. Additional reports came from the Governor’s Military Council, Women Veterans Advisory Council, Incarcerated Veterans Reintegration Council, Veterans Legislative Symposium, the Nevada Department of Veterans Services, and others.

Following these reports of findings and recommendations are three needs assessments and reports completed by an independent third party. These reports focus on policy discussions related to Nevada’s veterans, and specifically they focus on the need for a longterm care facility in northern Nevada, the statewide housing needs for aging veterans, and homelessness among Nevada’s veteran population. These reports are intended to complement the overall efforts of this report.
ICVA Endorsement

The ICVA decided to include all of these reports together with its own report in order to fulfill the requirements of NRS 417.0195 because its members believe that doing so provides the most thorough look at the challenges facing Nevada’s veterans and opportunities to address them. Each of the reports included here were written by the councils, committees, agencies, and other bodies that approved them. Because of this, the ICVA does not endorse every finding or recommendation in this report aside from the employment recommendations developed and approved by the ICVA, but rather provides them here for consideration by legislators and policymakers.
Nevada’s Green Zone Initiative:  
A Comprehensive Systems Approach to the Challenges Facing America’s Veterans

By Cyndy Ortiz Gustafson, MA, Strategic Progress,  
and Caleb S. Cage, Office of the Governor, State of Nevada

Introduction

The level of support for veterans in America is at unprecedented levels, so pronounced in fact that the Department of Defense has referred to it as a “Sea of Goodwill.” This support has spurred tremendous government engagement on issues related to helping veterans. The U.S. Congress has approved annual budgets for the VA that have increased to historic highs in recent years. President Obama has insisted on national collaboration efforts that have brought new focus, developed interagency collaboration, and expanded the places and ways that veterans can receive services.

Yet even with this focus and change and the call for effective service delivery, veterans have continued to fail. Over 135,815 disabled veterans were designated as having “employment handicaps” or “serious employment handicaps” by the VA’s Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program for veterans within fiscal year 2013, an increase from 116,000 in 2011; approximately 941,000 veterans ages 18 to 64 had been in poverty in the past year in 2013, a figure that was about the same in 2010, and according to the Department of Labor, 722,000 veterans remained unemployed in 2013.

If the VA budget has only increased in recent years and veterans are still failing, we have to look at the strength of local systems that touch veterans every day, including health systems, higher education systems, and workforce systems, and wonder if our focus should not also be on those systems to drive outcomes. Fortunately, many local communities have recognized this and have begun to knit together a fabric of strategically-designed, locally-driven initiatives that are reaching today’s generation of veterans and connecting them with the services and support they need. They are viewing these veterans not as victims or heroes but as assets to communities who should be reintegrated to build the communities they left to serve in uniform. They have realized that federal funding, laws, and actions will change, but

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the need to ensure the successful reintegration of valued service members, veterans, and their families will not, and they have prioritized community and state level ownership over this mission.

Nevada’s Green Zone Initiative (GZI) is one example of this kind of local effort, seeking to align and mobilize all available resources in the areas of employment, education, and wellness to best serve and support Nevada’s veterans and their families. It is a statewide strategic planning initiative and architecture designed to improve services, increase collaboration, and reduce duplication among service providers; to provide onramps for policy solutions at the most local level; and to provide mechanisms to feed those solutions up to local and state bodies, including the Nevada State Legislature. In this article, we discuss the structure and goals of the GZI, highlight specific features of the program, and note the best practices and lessons learned in developing and implementing such an initiative in the service of veterans.

Philosophy and Background for the Program

Putting together a statewide effort of this nature with many partners and components requires solid leadership and clear goals. Given the pressing challenge of effectively serving a growing veteran population in Nevada despite a complicated and uncoordinated array of existing veterans’ service programs and a battered state budget, the state of Nevada recognized the need for a coordinated response. With this in mind, the Nevada Department of Veterans Services spearheaded and began work on the GZI in 2012 with an aim to change the way veteran services are viewed, funded, delivered, evaluated, and adapted across Nevada.

As an important first step, our GZI team identified a threefold set of assumptions and goals to guide our work. First, we recognized that there are available resources in the form of innumerable services, resources, and opportunities currently available to Nevada’s veterans. Second, we set the objective that our work should ensure Nevada’s veterans are seen as assets to our communities, colleges, universities, and our workforce. Third, we solidified our commitment to a “boots on the ground” approach coordinated at the state level and leveraging local partners, noting that no single law or combination of laws at any level of government can be effective if there are not people on the ground willing to engage, and clear avenues available to them to join the effort.

Having set our objectives, the GZI team then embarked on a knowledge-gathering “development phase” along with a core group of veterans, leaders, stakeholders, and elected officials to understand the existing situation of Nevada’s veterans. Assessing baseline data, stakeholder input, and feedback, as well as conducting an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the systems we were focused on, were critical components of this effort. We communicated the results of our convening work and the data we gathered to leaders and stakeholders across Nevada through a comprehensive scan of the state’s veteran services landscape. This document, our “Business Case for Support,” identifies the gaps and duplications of services and programs that existed across the state at the start of the program, where those gaps were in the system, and who would be eligible for the services still needed to fill the gaps. The Business Case has become a central document to the overall effort, outlining the challenges at hand, establishing common goals, and providing a common language for public dialog on this effort.

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Continued research resulted in two additional guiding documents in the GZI’s development phase. The first was the GZI “Funding Analysis,” an analysis of how Nevada fares when competing for federal veteran program grants when compared to neighboring states, and how Nevada can best position itself for greater success and sustainability. The second, the GZI “Action Plan,” outlined the vision, mission, strategy, and structure of the GZI, as well as outlining several quick wins that could be achieved in each focus area to gain traction and momentum.

Building the Statewide Architecture and Implementing Change

With our guiding principles, goals, and documents in place, the GZI team began the first year of implementation. During this phase we developed our statewide systems change architecture, the framework that facilitates coordination between multiple layers of service providers, establishes onramps for public participation at the policy and program levels for all who wish to serve veterans, and challenges policymakers to consider how they can best meet the needs of the veterans in our state. The systems change architecture encompasses the various roles and efforts of the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs (ICVA), local Veteran Community Councils (VCC), focus area efforts, the Green Zone Network, and other local, place based and issue centered activities. We describe each of these components below.

Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs: The ICVA is a statewide working group created by Nevada Governor Sandoval with the given objectives of increasing collaboration, developing statewide priorities, and making recommendations for policy changes at the state level. The governor appointed thirteen people to the council, ten of whom represent his veteran-related cabinet agencies, and others from the federal VA, local communities, and non-profit service providers. The ICVA’s work involves identifying statewide resources, creating efficiencies in local, state, and federal government services as well as the non-profit sector, and establishing an action plan for improving veteran outcomes through the Green Zone Initiative and beyond.

Veteran Community Councils: The VCCs work much like the ICVA at the local level. These local councils are established and chaired by a mayor, a county commissioner, or another local elected or appointed leader, who then appoints members from local veteran service organizations, service providers, community leaders and stakeholders. The VCCs develop policy recommendations for the ICVA based on their local work, set local objectives, and formalize the coordination between organizations and service providers at the community level. They are also responsible for developing opportunities for the members of the public to interface and engage with veterans in their communities.

Flagship projects and quick wins: In addition to the statewide and local coordinating bodies, the GZI also developed a flagship project under each of its focus areas: education, employment, and wellness. These projects were intended to demonstrate success, help the GZI gain immediate traction, and provide concrete examples of progress to inspire others to lead veterans’ efforts at the local level. Although established to make immediate progress, these initiatives also had a lasting impact on the future phases of the initiative as well. Examples include starting the Suicide Prevention Task Force; working with four community colleges to promote credit for higher learning across the community college system; and starting the Green Zone Employer Program, which is intended to create a network of certified veteran-friendly employers who wish to engage with and hire veterans in communities throughout Nevada.
**Green Zone Network:** The final element of the GZI architecture was the Green Zone Network (GZN). The GZN, a unique social networking platform created specifically for Nevada’s veterans and veteran service providers, is arguably the most important aspect of the overall architecture, as it provides critical onramps for public participation into the initiative. Through this platform, service providers can coordinate their services, fill gaps in services, and identify which other organizations might be doing similar work in order to potentially leverage resources and assets. Similarly, veterans from different generations can communicate, share experiences, develop affinity communities, and follow important policy initiatives in the state. Green Zone Employers can also list jobs and recruit veterans through this site. The Network also places the power of self-help in the hands of veterans themselves, which, in and of itself provides a benefit to the entire community.9

**Achieving Outcomes in Practice: GZI’s Three Pillars**

With our philosophy and goals established and our statewide architecture in place, in 2013 the GZI began to focus on and devote time and resources to the specific activities and priorities that drive our effort. We have organized these activities around three “pillars” to anchor and support our work, each of which is briefly described below: the Policy Development Pillar, the Service Provider Coordination Pillar, and the Connecting to Veterans Pillar.

The **Policy Development Pillar** focuses on creating policy recommendations to increase collaboration and decrease barriers to necessary veterans’ services. This effort relies on subject matter experts and recommends changes in both statute and in regulation. While there are numerous policy development efforts, including veteran legislative summits, surveys, and other outreach, the most coordinated and highest level of policy development is now underway in the areas of veteran employment, education, and wellness through specific policy councils created by the governor or through legislation. The policy councils described below, and several others not listed here, largely completed their policy development work by the summer of 2014, and their recommendations will be synthesized into a coherent legislative agenda ahead of the 2015 session.

- Due to the importance placed on veteran unemployment in Nevada, the ICVA chose to take on the employment focus area at the state level. The group meets quarterly to review best practices from other states, identify opportunities in Nevada, and develop specific legislative recommendations. Their recent report consists of a total of fifteen recommendations, all of which are designed to provide comprehensive reform for veteran employment in Nevada.10

- To address the education focus area, Governor Sandoval created the Student Veterans Advisory Council through an Executive Order. Council membership is made up of student veterans who toured every state institution and one private institution to see the depth and breadth of services provided to veterans. Following their tour and meetings, the Council submitted a report of detailed recommendations to the governor to improve student veteran success, to be considered by the legislature and the Board of Regents which oversees the college and university system in Nevada.11

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9 Nevada Department of Veterans Services, Green Zone Network, [www.greenzonenetwork.org](http://www.greenzonenetwork.org) (October 21, 2014).
• The Veterans Suicide Prevention Council was also created through an Executive Order signed by Governor Sandoval to formally replace the Veterans Suicide Prevention Task Force and to develop recommendations for the wellness focus area. Members represented various service provider agencies, veteran service organizations, and the Nevada National Guard, among others. Their final report consisted of seven recommendations aimed at decreasing Nevada’s suicide rate among veterans.\textsuperscript{12}

Under the Service Provider Pillar, the GZI is continuing to build out opportunities and platforms to engage veterans. At the community level, we replaced the Veteran Community Councils, which had limited success, with a veteran community collaborative model, which has been successful elsewhere. These collaboratives regularly convene community service providers to veterans, military members, and their families to create an enhanced local referral network committed to improving outcomes through a sustainable and measurable approach. Additionally, several federal grants, continued emphasis on the Green Zone Network, and increased community participation and support are all allowing the GZI to increase collaboration and coordination as well. Other important successes under this pillar of work include the development of a formal volunteer training program and establishment of an annual service provider conference created and funded by the state Office of Veterans Services.

By far the most important aspect of the efforts to coordinate service providers in Nevada, however, has been expansion of the relationship between the GZI and the Nevada National Guard. In March of 2013, the director of the Nevada Department of Veterans Services and the Adjutant General of the Nevada National Guard signed a memorandum of understanding to align the efforts of the Pentagon’s Joining Community Forces campaign and the Green Zone Initiative. Nevada has found the marriage of Joining Community Forces and the Green Zone Initiative to be a perfect institutional collaboration to augment the ongoing efforts described above.

Finally, the Connecting to Veterans Pillar of the GZI remains the most challenging aspect of the overall effort. Meeting the needs of the individual service member, veteran, or family member requires a personal connection with them, and this has been very difficult to understand and achieve. While it is the most challenging, it is also the most important, and we are prioritizing work under this Pillar in order to achieve outcomes and reach our goals.

In addition to the Green Zone Network web-based platform, the GZI developed several important approaches under this engagement pillar. Instead of holding benefits fairs or job fairs, which have proven to be highly ineffective, Nevada is engaging veterans through their sense of service, their willingness to lead, and their desire to sustain the same camaraderie they had in the military. Testing this approach, we have held multiple community service events, such as neighborhood clean-ups and a homeless feed, in 2014, with high participation from veterans, service members, and their families. Several partners also hosted special engagement activities such as writing groups, physical workouts, and other opportunities for veterans as well.

The most inventive piece of our veteran engagement effort is a professional mentorship program called Engage, which was created by veterans, for veterans. Engage focuses on peer-to-peer mentorship to provide veterans with skills, support, and access to employment opportunities. In order to develop those opportunities within the community and to showcase the successes of their participants, Engage

gathers monthly for a breakfast with community leaders and members, service providers, and those wishing to serve or employ veterans.

Challenges and Successes of Building a System

Bringing all of these individual efforts and programs together and keeping the initiative moving forward has been valuable and important work, but as one might expect, it has not always come about smoothly. In addition to realizing numerous wins and building momentum over the past few years, the GZI team has learned many critical lessons from failures and challenges along the way.

For example, the Veteran Community Council concept started well, with ten communities signing memoranda of understanding, but the concept evolved and formalized at a much slower rate than we anticipated, largely due to the informal nature of the councils. Another challenge came through the very limited amount of staffing supported by the state to see various elements through, which in turn required the small team to focus on building momentum at the tactical level and forego system-wide changes at the strategic level, at least for a time. It also became clear during the first implementation phase that the largest challenge by far would be making the personal connections with veterans necessary to link them with beneficial services and resources. We learned early on that providing a social networking platform alone would not be enough, and that we needed to personally engage with veterans in the communities they lived in order to understand their needs and ambitions and connect them directly to those who could help them succeed.

Even with these challenges, the GZI experienced considerable successes as well. The statewide architecture was leveraged to secure millions of new dollars in grants to support the effort; additional staffing was approved by the legislature as a result of Governor Sandoval’s support; and the language of the Green Zone Initiative was injected into policy development discussions at every level of state government. All of this resulted in a very successful legislative session in 2013, in which important elements of this effort such as the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs were established in statute in perpetuity, consolidating previous successes in concrete, legal terms and providing a platform for continued successes.

These successes and challenges during the initial implementation phases had enormous impacts on subsequent phases of the effort. The challenges identified which aspects of the model needed to be adapted or discarded, such as the Veteran Community Councils. The successes created a base of support for the effort to make the successful case for more staffing and resources, allowing the GZI’s key leaders to reassess the effort at the strategic level and regain momentum going forward.

Conclusion

Local systems impact veterans in every aspect of their lives, and aligning those systems, making them more efficient, and ensuring that the “Sea of Goodwill” is built upon to improve veteran outcomes is challenging but critical to the long term outcomes we seek to achieve for this important population. In Nevada, the Green Zone Initiative set out to do many things, including changing the way veterans and veterans services were viewed within our state. Even with some setbacks, the GZI’s successes have shown that local collaboration and statewide coordination can have a tremendous, even immediate impact.
By building a model that appreciates services provided at the federal level but takes local ownership of the work, the GZI has improved outcomes for Nevada’s service members, veterans, and their families. We have injected the DNA of the GZI into all levels of government. We are sustaining systems change and service delivery through public and private partnerships, philanthropy, federal funding, and public policy change. We are mobilizing communities and organizations toward a shared change agenda. Most importantly, as a result of this work, key services, resources, benefits, and opportunities have become available and more relevant to the veterans who are interested in accessing them. As the GZI continues to grow and evolve, it will assist veterans in successfully reaching their educational, employment, and wellness goals.

Just as the GZI adopted successful strategies and tools from other state and local governments, and even from non-veteran initiatives, it also serves as a model for others in changing outcomes through a systems change approach. The principles of local, collective efforts toward a common goal are the same even if challenges, opportunities, and resources differ. The Green Zone Initiative is Nevada’s approach, one we hope will serve as a model open to modification for implementation in other communities, to better and support the futures of veterans across the country.

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Successes of the GZI and the “Year of the Veteran”

Since April of 2012, the Green Zone Initiative and other efforts have made tremendous progress toward improving service delivery, increasing coordination, and increasing outcomes for Nevada’s service members, veterans, and their families. This progress includes millions of dollars in grants received, comprehensive policy development to remove barriers and increase opportunities, the development of new programs and services, and various services and programs within Nevada, including the Green Zone Initiative, being recognized as promising or best practices. Some of the successes of this time are listed below by the phase in which they were accomplished.

Development Phase (April 2012 through April 2013)

The Nevada Department of Veterans Services (NDVS) holds statewide convenings around the focus areas of veteran employment, education, and wellness to identify needs, challenges, and opportunities facing veterans in Nevada in what will become the foundation for the Green Zone Initiative (GZI).

NDVS distributes statewide surveys to provide additional data to the convenings.

NDVS holds the Veterans Legislative Symposium to develop policy recommendations from within the veteran community.

Governor Sandoval signs Executive Order 2012-15 (July 2012) establishing the Governor’s Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs (ICVA) to identify priorities, increase collaboration, and make recommendations through a report to the Governor by December of 2013.

NDVS holds the Veterans Legislative Summit in order to provide an update for veteran advocates on the progress made since the Legislative Symposium ahead of the 77th Legislative Session.

NDVS and the Nevada National Guard (NNG) hold the Veterans and Military Day at the Legislature to convene veteran, advocates, and family members at the legislature during the Session and to provide the community with an opportunity to see the assets and capabilities of the Nevada National Guard.

The Nevada Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and NDVS create the Veterans Suicide Prevention Task Force and receive a Policy Academy grant from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to develop an action plan to reduce military and veteran suicide in the state.

NDVS publishes the GZI Business Case, Environmental Scan, Funding Analysis, and Action Plan in order to provide an understanding of the landscape for veteran services in Nevada, the argument to support a systems change approach, and the roadmap for the way ahead. The four reports are vetted and approved by the ICVA as the final report of the Council fulfilling the requirements of the Executive Order.
NDVS and the NNG sign a Memorandum of Understanding that aligns the efforts, goals, and objectives of the GZI with the NNG’s Joining Community Forces (JCF) initiative.

**First Implementation Phase (April 2013 through April 2014)**

Passage and signing of several important veteran- and military-related bills during the 77th Legislative Session:

- **AB29** (Effective October 1, 2013): Creates the Committee to Review Suicide Fatalities, which includes a veteran/military representative, to review suicide fatalities in Nevada and make recommendations to the Legislature to prevent future occurrences.

- **AB58** (Effective October 1, 2013):
  - Changes the name of the Nevada Office of Veterans Services to the Nevada Department of Veterans Services, making it a cabinet-level agency.
  - Authorizes and creates a separate gift account for the Northern Nevada Veterans Home.
  - Establishes the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs in statute.
  - Creates a full discount for veterans with at least a 10% disability for Nevada State Parks.

- **AB111** (Effective May 21, 2013): Modifies the Nevada Disabled Veterans License Plate to include a universally-recognized symbol for disabled persons.

- **AB224** (Effective July 1, 2014): Revises provisions governing the collection and maintenance of data on military families by the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Nevada Department of Education.

- **AB260** (Effective July 1, 2013): requires the Nevada System of Higher Education to provide for in-state tuition for veterans using the Post-9/11 GI Bill within two years of their separation from service.

- **AB266** (Effective July 1, 2013): Provides for a definition of a veteran within Chapter 417 of the Nevada Revised Statutes.

- **AB175** (Effective May 10, 2013): Revises provisions relating to uniformed-service and overseas voters.

- **AB358** (Effective January 1, 2014): Enacts the Uniform Deployed Parents Custody and Visitation Act.

- **AB364** (Effective October 1, 2013): Increases the amount of time a member of the Reserves of National Guard can miss from State employment in order to fulfill military orders.

- **AB505** (Effective June 1, 2013): Appropriates funding totaling $1,013,717 for a capital improvement project for the Office of Veterans Services for advance planning through bid documents for a 96-bed northern Nevada state veterans home.

- **SB215** (Effective July 31, 2013): Allows veterans to transfer their taxation exemption to their spouses.

- **SB244** (Effective January 1, 2014): Authorizes the placement of a designation of veteran status on Nevada Driver’s Licenses and other identification cards and also requires the DMV to provide certain aggregate information to NDVS on a monthly basis.
• **SB230** (Effective June 1, 2013): Provides for the design, construction or installation and maintenance of a memorial dedicated to Nevada’s fallen soldiers and requires the Veterans Services Commission to establish criteria for the definition of a Fallen Nevadan.

• **SB 309** (Effective May 27, 2013): Urges the Nevada System of Higher Education and various business organizations to establish mentoring programs for veterans and other populations.

• **SB365** (Effective October 1, 2013): Establishes the crime of stolen valor within state law.

NDVS launches the Green Zone Initiative’s full statewide architecture (August 2013) to provide an overview of the effort for all community partners and define opportunities for collaboration.

NDVS launches the Green Zone Network (GZN) in order to provide an online, social networking platform for all veterans, family members, service providers, and members of the community.

The State of Nevada presents on the GZI along with the State of Maryland and the Under Secretary of Veterans Affairs as state-level solutions to veteran program coordination to the National Governors Association Health and Homeland Security panel.

Efforts established to create quick wins and momentum in each of the GZI focus areas of *employment, education, and wellness*:

• **Employment**: The Green Zone Employers program is launched in August of 2013 as the result of a $75,000 grant from the Nevada Military Support Alliance provides a training and certification program for private employers wishing to become veteran-friendly employers.

• **Education**: Governor Sandoval creates the Student Veterans Advisory Council by Executive Order 2013-09 (August 2013) in order to make recommendations to increase success in higher education for student veterans.

• **Wellness**: The Veterans Suicide Prevention Task Force is established as the main effort for the wellness focus area. Initial successes include the completion of state strategic planning, the development of a Suicide Review Panel with a veteran/military representative, “Walk in Memory, Walk for Hope” held in communities throughout the state around the theme of military and veteran suicide awareness, training of NNG trainers in suicide prevention, and other accomplishments.

Veteran Community Councils are created by Memoranda of Understanding between the State of Nevada and ten communities throughout the state in order to carry out similar tasks as the ICVA at the local level.

Green Zone Foundation Fund (GZFF) is established as a fund of the Nevada Community Foundation in order to solidify the public/private partnership of the GZI.

GZFF receives a $25,000 grant from JP Morgan Chase to develop toolkit to assist other states, regions, industries, or sectors to replicate the GZI program elsewhere.
The Office of the Governor is one of six states to receive a $50,000 Policy Academy Grant from the National Governors Association to streamline credentialing for veterans in the fields of Licensed Practical Nurses, Emergency Medical Technicians, and Law Enforcement.

The GZI is listed as an "Innovative Examples with Tangible Influence on Support and Services for Military Families" in a Sea of Goodwill White Paper written by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff’s Office of Warrior and Family Support.

NDVS receives a letter of intent from the US Department of Veterans Affairs to fund expansion grant of $700,845 for the Northern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery.

Western Nevada College, Great Basin College, Truckee Meadows Community College, and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas all selected as 2014 Military Friendly Schools. And UNR is named top 100 military-friendly school by Military Advanced Education magazine.

Governor Sandoval signs Executive Order 2013-14 (September 2013) creating the Governor’s Military Council to make recommendations on securing the federal defense infrastructure within the state and seeking opportunities attract new defense infrastructure to the State.

Governor Sandoval signs Executive Order 2013-22 (November 2013) creating the Veterans Suicide Prevention Council, which replaces the Veterans Suicide Prevention Task Force and is established to make recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature that reduce suicide among Nevada’s veteran population.

Governor Sandoval signs Executive Order 2013-21 (November 2013) creating the Nevada State Flag Program to provide a reminder of home for service members who are deployed overseas or around the country.

The “2013-14 Report to the Legislative Commission on the Activities and Accomplishments of the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs” is submitted to the Governor and the Legislature as the first report of the ICVA as a statutorily-created body. The report outlines agency successes around veteran issues leading up to the February 2014 report deadline. The successes align with the Governor’s strategic priorities as they are reflected in the objectives of the GZI toward better serving service members, veterans, and their families in Nevada.

Some of the early successes are listed below by agency:

- **Department of Business and Industry**: Veteran priority component added to 2014 allocation of project dollars to better incentivize developers to build housing for veterans in need and bonus points to developers who prioritize a veterans component to their tax credit project applications.

- **Department of Corrections**: Formalization of existing veteran reintegration mentorship program for state correctional officers and department training personnel working with Freedom in Tomorrow program to assist veteran correctional officers in obtaining uniforms and other initial employment needs.
• **Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation**: Continuing to operate the DOL’s Veterans Employment Training Program statewide and expanding opportunities through the Veterans Grant Program for small business loans.

• **Department of Health and Human Services**: Created model “veteran friendly employer” program at the Department level, advocated for passage Assembly Bill 29 (77th Session) creating the suicide review panel, established a grant-funded position to serve the mental health needs of the military and veterans, and assisted in establishing the Veteran Suicide Prevention Task Force.

• **Department of Public Safety**: Current academy classes have significant veteran participation, between 25% and 29%, and supporting veterans licensure reciprocity opportunities for law enforcement professionals.

• **Department of Veterans Services**: Developing, implementing, and supporting all elements of the GZI while carrying on other statutory requirements of service officers, cemeteries, and the state nursing home.

• **Nevada National Guard**: Centralized family support services to improve access to counseling, financial, and other services, created an aggressive resiliency program to address mental health needs, and signed MOU with Department of Veterans Services to focus JCF efforts with GZI.

• **Nevada System of Higher Education**: Supported passage of AB260 providing in-state tuition for student veterans, support of staffing the Governor’s Student Veterans Advisory Council, and examining use of prior learning assessments to increase credit hours for veterans and all students.

• **Office of Economic Development**: Developed a materials program for Unmanned Aerial Systems at UNR, created the Battle Born Venture program for defense-related entrepreneurial endeavors, and represented on the Governor’s Military Council.

• **Nevada Indian Commission**: Supported the Nevada’s first tribal veterans conference, military and veteran focus added to new hire requirements, and Director appointed to the Veterans Services Commission.

• **Department of Motor Vehicles**: Added Veteran Designator to Drivers License, supporting efforts to provide NDVS with data on veterans in Nevada to increase services, automated the system veterans use for their GST exemption.

NDVS awarded a $23,000 grant from the VA Office of Rural Health to develop a tracking system to locate and thereby better serve veterans pending the development of the software system for the state.

**Second Implementation Phase (April 2014 through December 2014)**

Governor Sandoval signs a proclamation making 2014 the “Year of the Veteran” in Nevada (January 2014). The aim of the proclamation is to make Nevada the most military- and veteran-friendly state in the nation. Many agencies and organizations throughout Nevada responded favorably throughout the phase period to the vision of the by focusing their energies on serving veterans through new initiatives.
The City of Sparks passes a Resolution supporting the creation of a regional Veteran Community Commission along with the City of Reno and Washoe County in support of the Green Zone Initiative.

NDVS becomes a commemorative partner with the United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration to plan and conduct two events annually until 2025 to recognize the Vietnam Veterans and their families' service, valor, and sacrifice.

NDVS sponsors a travelling exhibit, “Always Lost Exhibit; Nevada’s Gift to the Nation” throughout the Nevada sesquicentennial. The exhibit, memorializing American Soldiers who have fallen in combat during the Global War on Terror travels to communities across Nevada.

Governor Sandoval signs Executive Order 2014-02 (February 2014) requiring all state agencies to receive training, develop Green Zone Network profiles, and create a plan that would allow them to be certified as Green Zone Employers.

The GZI and the NNG’s JCF program partner to bring veterans together to serve dinner to the Reno homeless community as one of the first outreach efforts appealing to the veteran community’s sense of service.

The Nevada League of Cities and Municipalities and the Nevada Association of Counties pass resolutions creating a joint veterans services committee between the two bodies in order to support local veterans initiatives and the ICVA. This is the first joint committee to ever be established between the two entities.

The City of North Las Vegas passes a resolution creating and appointing members to the North Las Vegas Veteran Community Commission to advise the Mayor on issues related to veterans in the City. The City of North Las Vegas is the first city in the state to take this formal approach.

Washoe County passes a Resolution supporting the creation of a regional Veteran Community Commission along with the City of Reno and the City of Sparks in support of the Green Zone Initiative.

NDVS hosts the Veterans Legislative Symposium to gather policy recommendations from the veteran, military, and service provider communities.

The Housing Division of the Department of Business and Industry identifies existing funds to apply toward their newly-established “Hero to Home” program, which gives reduced rate mortgages to qualifying veterans.

The Housing Advisory Board of the Department of Business creates a Veterans Housing Task Force to determine the best way to add a veteran priority component to future allocations of project dollars to better incentivize developers to build housing for veterans in need.

The Employment Security Board amends their rules to create a $15,000 loan program for veterans and senior citizen small business owners.

The Department of Veterans Affairs awards a $50,000 grant for Transportation of Veterans in Highly Rural Areas (Elko). The State of Nevada was one of eight awardees to receive the grant.
Governor Sandoval signs Executive Order 2014-08 (March 2014) creating the Women Veterans Advisory Council and requiring the Council to develop a report with recommendations for improving outcomes for Nevada’s women veterans.

The GZI and the NNG’s JCF program partner to conduct a neighborhood cleanup in Reno. Over 120 veteran, active duty, and family member volunteers participate with the State of Nevada, the City of Reno, and the City of Sparks.

Governor Sandoval signs Executive Order 2014-11 (May 2014) requiring licensing bodies for the fields of law enforcement, nursing, and emergency medical technicians to develop bridge programs or similar, and to start capturing data on the number of service members and veterans seeking licensure in their fields.

The ICVA submits its comprehensive employment recommendations to the Governor to inform his legislative initiatives for the 2015 Legislative Session.

The Student Veterans Advisory Council submits its comprehensive education recommendations to the Governor to inform his legislative initiatives for the 2015 Legislative Session.

The Veteran Suicide Prevention Council submits its comprehensive wellness recommendations to the Governor to inform his legislative initiatives for the 2015 Legislative Session.

The Governor’s Military Council submits its comprehensive recommendations for protecting existing and attracting new defense infrastructure to the Governor to inform his legislative initiatives for the 2015 Legislative Session.

The NNG receives a $650,000 dollar grant from the federal Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Program to provide for employment outreach specialists for active, guard, and reserve service members to be coordinated under the GZI.

NDVS publishes a comprehensive needs assessment for the Northern Nevada Veterans Home, which was initially funded in part through the 77th Legislative Session.

Governor Sandoval signs Executive Order 2014-12 (May 2012) creating the Incarcerated Veterans Reintegration Council and requiring it to provide him with recommendations for improving outcomes for Nevada’s incarcerated veterans.


The Office of the Governor partners with the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco and the Nevada Community Foundation to host private sector executives at conferences in Las Vegas and Reno in order to inform them of the opportunity to increase their hiring of veterans through the Green Zone Employers program.
The Office of the Governor engages with each of the state’s independent licensing boards to inform them of possible upcoming changes to their processes and to seek their input with respect to licensure reciprocity for all service members and veterans.

The Green Zone Foundation Fund is awarded a $5,000 grant from Schwab Bank to conduct a “Veterans Financial Stability Survey,” which identifies the financial stability of Nevada’s veterans in order to improve financial literacy and opportunity.

The City of Reno passes a Resolution supporting the creation of a regional Veteran Community Commission along with the City of Sparks and Washoe County in support of the GZI.

Governor Sandoval signs Executive Order 2014-17 (July 2014) requiring the Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation to identify federal dollars to develop two new veteran outreach specialists for Las Vegas to be coordinated under the GZI.

Governor Sandoval signs Executive Order 2014-18 (July 2014) requiring the Governor’s Office of Economic Development to create a specific program for recognition for veteran-owned businesses in Nevada in order to help veterans compete for all government contracts.

NDVS is approved for four VISTA volunteers from AmeriCorps to work with the Beyond the Yellow Ribbon grant-funded positions and the new outreach specialist positions created under the Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation, all of which will be coordinated under the GZI.

The Women Veterans Advisory Council provides their interim report of findings and recommendations to the Governor.

Governor Sandoval submits four comprehensive veterans legislative reform bills to the Legislative Counsel Bureau as Bill Draft Requests. These requests represent part of the Governor’s veteran legislative agenda for the 78th Legislative Session in 2015, and are developed from the Veterans Legislative Symposium, the various policy councils and policy academies, as well as work with NDVS.

The GZI is chosen as the only state initiative to present on a national Webinar hosted by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Agency as an “Effective Outreach and Engagement Strategies for Engaging Service Members Veterans and their Families.”

Nevada is repeatedly listed as a national leader in reducing veteran unemployment by the federal Department of Labor.

Memorandum of Understanding signed between the federal VA Southern Nevada Medical Center and the Department of Corrections to provide telehealth services to incarcerated veterans in Nevada’s prison system.

The GZI and the NNG’s JCF program partner with Nevada’s Commission on Service and AmeriCorps Volunteers to help clean up parts of the cities of Reno and North Las Vegas for Patriots Day and National Day of Service.
NDVS is awarded a $50,000 grant from the VA for Transportation of Veterans in Highly Rural Areas (Winnemucca).

NDVS is awarded a $52,513.51 grant from the VA on September 26 for a City of Las Vegas Adaptive Sports Program.

The Veteran Suicide Prevention Council is funded to attend a second Policy Implementation Academy hosted by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Agency. The GZI briefed as one of three states selected to present as a state best practice for “Strengthening Interagency Collaboration for Suicide Prevention.”

Governor Sandoval signs Executive Order 2014-20 (September 2014) requiring the gathering of baseline data by all agencies and boards serving veterans in the state. The data is to be provided in aggregate to NDVS by February of 2015, and the agency is then to compile a report of baseline veteran services data to the Governor by October of 2015.

The Council on State Governments highlights the GZI for its presentations on promising practices under the title of “Increasing Educational Attainment with Comprehensive Data Systems.”

NDVS and the NNG’s JCF program host a joint training conference in Las Vegas to train veteran and military advocates on military, veteran, and community support programs.

NDVS launches the Nevada Veteran Advocate program to formally train and certify veteran advocates across the state.

The Nevada System of Higher Education receives a $10,000,000 TAACCCT education and employment grant, leveraging the GZI architecture in their proposal. Nearly $3,500,000 will fund veteran services on community college campuses through construction and staffing of veteran centers, credit-for-prior-learning programs, and direct job placement.

The National Guard Bureau presents the GZI as one of five state best practices for implementing the White House’s Joining Community Forces initiative.

NDVS and the Office of the Governor are awarded a $10,000.00 grant from the National Governors Association to host a Governor’s Summit. The State of Nevada has decided to use this funding to host two summits in 2015, one in Reno and one in Las Vegas, to roll out all of the successes of the “Year of the Veteran” and to lay the foundation for action in 2015.

The GZI “Systems Change for Veterans Toolkit” is published and distributed to states, regions, and entities wishing to follow Nevada’s lead in serving veterans.

A Veteran Business Outreach Sub-center is opened in Reno and in Las Vegas during a ribbon cutting at a two-day veteran business conference at the Governor’s Mansion in Carson City.

NDVS partners with the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco and the Nevada Community Foundation to convene statewide service providers around the topic of homelessness within the veteran population.
Governor Sandoval unveils the *Book of Nevada’s Fallen Heroes* as a memorial containing the names of Nevadans who have fallen during wartime.

The State of Nevada enters into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Las Vegas Veterans Memorial to locate their privately funded exhibit honoring all of Nevada’s veterans, service members, and their families on the grounds of the Grant Sawyer Building in Las Vegas.

NDVS publishes a comprehensive housing needs assessment for all veterans over the age of 55 in the state, focusing on assisted living, adult day care, and long term nursing care needs.

NDVS publishes a comprehensive study of needs of homeless veterans, the programs, and practices currently in place, and an analysis of current assets and service gaps.

In December of 2014, the Incarcerated Veterans Reintegration Council publishes its final report of recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature.

The Green Zone Foundation Fund receives a $20,000 grant from Schwab Bank to conduct a “State and Local Government and Systems Policy Development” effort. This grant assists the GZFF in convening leaders of national veteran organizations in order to provide state-level policy recommendations to improve veteran financial stability through education, employment, and wellness initiatives.
Based on the successes achieved and the architecture developed through the first three phases of development and implementation, the Green Zone Initiative (GZI) is positioned to be fully operational in 2015. These operations will fall under the GZI’s three pillars—Policy Development, Service Provider Coordination, and Outreach to Veterans. By taking this approach, Nevada can leverage the work and established partnerships and structures to create a sustainable and functional effort to improve outcomes in the lives of service members, veterans, and their families.

Structurally, this will require the programmatic functions of the GZI’s three pillars to be the direct responsibility of one of the GZI’s three partner organizations—the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs (ICVA), the Nevada National Guard (NNG), or the Nevada Department of Veterans Services (NDVS). The organizations not in direct ownership of that pillar’s programmatic function will serve in a supporting role. This structure will allow for the work under each pillar to not only be carried out by a responsible organization, but also allow those activities to influence the activities under the remaining pillars, allowing for a sustainable, fully integrated system.

**Policy Development Pillar:** The ICVA will be directly responsible for work under the Policy Development Pillar with the NNG and NDVS in support. This structure is codified in statute, which requires that the Adjutant General and the NDVS Director or their designees serve on the ICVA as well. The primary execution of the Policy Development Pillar will be through the annual report of activities and recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature due in February of every year.

Activities include:

- **Veterans Legislative Symposium:** This event is hosted by the Office of the Governor and NDVS in even years and is designed to bring together leaders and members of the veterans community to identify legislative priorities for the upcoming session.

- **Veterans Legislative Summit:** This event is hosted by the Office of the Governor and NDVS in odd years immediately prior to the Legislative Session and is designed to inform leaders and members of the veterans community on progress related to the legislative priorities identified during the Symposium.

- **Biennial Legislative Session:** The Nevada State Legislature meets every other year from February to June. The Chair of the ICVA will work with the Office of the Governor and other organizations to develop Bill Draft Requests based on the recommendations made in the ICVA annual report. The Chair will also advocate for the passage of these bills as appropriate.

- **Veterans and Military Day at the Legislature:** NDVS and the NNG will host this event during the Legislative Session to bring together the veteran community, to bring awareness of the NNG’s mission, assets, and capabilities.

**Service Provider Coordination Pillar:** The NNG will be directly responsible for the Service Provider Coordination Pillar with the ICVA and NDVS in support. This structure is institutionalized through the Green Zone Collaboratives (GZCs) to be established by Joining Community Forces (JCF) first in Washoe and Clark Counties. The GZCs are intended to provide a no-wrong-door approach for service members,
veterans, and their families by coordinating local service providers at the community, local, state, and federal levels.

NDVS and Joining Community Forces (JCF) of the NNG have formally worked together in efforts associated with the Service Provider Coordination Pillar since a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the two entities in March of 2013. In addition, NDVS undertook an effort starting in August of 2013 to establish Veteran Community Councils (VCC) at the local level to mirror the work of the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs at the state level, which was also accomplished through MOUs. Following the MOU phase of the VCCs, the Office of the Governor has worked with communities and organizations throughout the state to formalize Veteran Advisory Commissions (VAC).

The effort to establish VACs resulted in only modest success. Currently, the Nevada League of Cities and Association of Counties have formed their first ever joint standing committee for veterans services, the City of North Las Vegas has an established VAC, and the governing bodies of Reno, Sparks, and Washoe County have all passed resolutions supporting the formation of a regional committee to better coordinate services for veterans as well. While these efforts have not resulted in widespread adoption of the VCC and VAC models, they have established a base on which a more robust service provider coordination effort can be built, particularly in the form of GZCs.

The Collaborative model is designed to provide a network of community service providers to enhance the services provided by NDVS, NNG, and other local sources, especially as those resources decrease. They are designed to serve as the coordinator of local, state, and federal resources, in order to increase efficiency, decrease gaps, and improve service delivery. Success of the local GZCs is measured in the number of services regularly engaged through its convening structure and online social networking platform, and in the number of direct referrals of service members, veterans, and their families to the services they need.

The GZCs are based on a “collective impact” model. That is, in order for them to be successful at the local level, they must embrace the “five conditions for collective success,” which are a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and backbone support organizations. These conditions can be seen throughout the mission, process, and structure of the GZCs, all of which are described below.

**Vision:** Enhancing collaboration between community organizations to provide a “no wrong door” approach for all Service Members, Veterans and their Families.

**Mission:** The mission of the GZC is to improve the delivery of community resources available to service members, veterans, and their families in order to improve outcomes in the areas of education, employment, and wellness during their transition from military service and after.

**Goals:**
- Foster a sustainable network of local support by reaching out to our local veteran and nonprofit organizations. In turn, we will make Nevada the most “Veteran Friendly State in the Nation” according to the Governor’s Proclamation.
- Facilitate community support through government, non government, nonprofit, faith based, corporate partnerships and local citizens by creating the JCF Steering Committee.
- Fill service and information gaps by creating Working Groups, which will develop more structure within each specific category to help Service Members, Veterans, and their Family Members.
• Collaboration with Green Zone Network Initiative, including a marketing plan and inclusion of JCF on the website.

Common Agenda: The GZCs are made up of service-specific working groups, and maximize coordination by ensuring that the working Chairs and members understand how their efforts impact the overall mission of the Collaborative. The working groups represent all the resources for service members, veterans, and their families in the region, they meet monthly, or at the discretion of the Chair, and they work to identify challenges and plans to address them. The Collaborative will begin with the first three working groups, with the intent of growing to six once the organizations are better established:

1. Employment
2. Education
3. Wellness
4. Public Relations and Referral Management
5. Legal
6. Homeless and Housing

Continuous Communication: Communication within the GZCs is facilitated by the in-person meetings and online social networking platform. The entire collaborative meets in person every other month for networking, panel presentations, and other collaborative activities. Members of the GZCs are required to create a profile on the Green Zone Network and should encourage the service members, veterans, and family members they are serving to do so as well. Following the panel presentations, there will be a short time for questions and all the working group chairs give an update as necessary. The panel presentation is put together by the working group that has been designated for that meeting. All statewide GZCs will meet together during the annual NDVS/JCF conference.

Shared Measurement System: Data measurements will focus on services directly provided, referrals made, and usage analytics for the Green Zone Networks.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities: The GZC is made up of local service providers, leaders, and members of veteran service organizations all engaging in using their resources to serve the same or similar population. The GZC has a steering committee that is made up the chairs of the working groups described below, the NNG State Family Programs Director, a representative from the Office of the Governor or NDVS will serve as vice chair, and a member of the NNG will be selected to serve as the chair. The steering committee will meet once per month and will have an agenda and minutes for each meeting.

Backbone Organization: The NNG’s JCF staff will serve as the GZC staff by convening meetings, housing GZC documents, and providing organizational communication. The Office of the Governor and NDVS will be in support.

Finally, the Connecting to Veterans Pillar of the GZI remains the most challenging aspect of the overall effort. Meeting the needs of the individual service member, veteran, or family member requires a personal connection with them, and this has been very difficult to achieve. While it is the most challenging, it is also the most important and we are prioritizing work under this Pillar in order to achieve outcomes and reach our goals.
One significant challenge is locating Nevada’s veterans in order to provide information to them regarding services and opportunities that they may be eligible. The creation and deployment of the Green Zone Network (GZN), a social online network, is connecting veterans with service providers and with other veterans. The online community was surveyed to determine next steps in GZN modification and planned changes include creating a more personalized veterans experience with information “pushed” to veterans based on their profile demographic.

Another ongoing initiative to identify and connect with veterans in order to better serve them is the development of a Nevada Veterans Information System (VIS). VIS is a cooperative multi-state effort with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to create a web portal and database that is populated from other state and federal databases. It has proven to be difficult to connect with Nevada’s veterans, especially those in Southern Nevada who have more transient patterns than those in Northern and Central Nevada. To achieve the full potential of the “Connecting to Veterans” Pillar the first important step is locating our veterans.

While virtual connections are valuable, especially with today’s tech-savvy veteran and with veterans in rural areas who cannot easily visit service providers, personal face-to-face connections are a critical component of the “Connecting to Veterans” Pillar.

The GIZI developed several important personal connection approaches under this pillar. Instead of holding benefits or job fairs, which have proven to be highly ineffective, Nevada is engaging veterans through their sense of service, their willingness to lead, and their desire to sustain the same camaraderie they had in the military. Testing this approach, we have had multiple community service events, such as neighborhood clean-ups and a homeless feed in 2014, with high participation from veterans, service members, and their families. Several partners also hosted special engagement activities such as writing groups, physical workouts, and other opportunities.

The concept of tapping into the veterans sense of camaraderie and assisting others is resulting in a paradigm shift in the way we consider veterans programming and services. Rather than viewing veterans simply as “clients” who need help, innovative programming is personally involving veterans in developing solutions for addressing the needs of the larger veterans community. A great example of this type of programming is the professional mentorship program called Engage, which was created by veterans, for veterans. Engage focuses on peer-to-peer mentorship to provide veterans with skills, support, and access to employment opportunities. In order to develop those opportunities within the community and to showcase the successes of their participants, Engage gathers monthly for a breakfast with community leaders and members, service providers, and those wishing to serve or employ veterans.

A cornerstone of NDVS efforts to connect with veterans is the Veterans Advocacy and Support Program (VAST). The VAST program employs 12 of Nevada’s 31 Veterans Service Officers (VSOs), professionals who assist veterans and their families submit claims for state and federal benefits. The other 19 VSOs are paid or volunteer members of National Veterans Service Organizations. VSOs are a tremendous resource in the effort to connect with veterans, however, there are simply not enough VSOs to meet the need. Additionally, only three of these accredited VSOs are in Nevada’s rural areas, requiring state VSOs to travel to 26 community clusters throughout the state as a part of the Rural Outreach Program (ROVER). ROVER is an important program but the need to provide more comprehensive coverage to rural veterans has led to the new partnership with NDVS and the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE). NSHE has provided office space and video-teleconferencing equipment on rural campuses that
has increased veteran access to VSO services. This collaboration has doubled the number of case management appointment hours with veterans located in rural communities.

By far the most important NDVS effort to improve the personal connection with veterans was the creation of the Nevada Veterans Advocate (NVA Program). The NVA program trains and certifies volunteers in urban and rural communities (online and during annual training conferences) to assist veterans understand and connect with benefit and opportunities. Each NVA is mentored by a Nevada VSO; the VSO provides information to the NVA and the NVA provides a full-time community presence that helps NDVS understand community needs. 10 of 20 courses are currently offered online and all 20 will be online by the end of 2014. Over 200 volunteers have participated in the initial training courses. The next training conference will occur in July 2015. The goal is to have certified NVAs in every Nevada community and initial response to the program is very positive.
Introduction and Executive Summary: The report that follows is the result of the efforts of the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs (Council). It contains background on the organization and its purpose, details from a statewide veterans survey conducted by the Office of the Governor, and specific policy recommendations for the Governor. When updated and presented to the Legislature, this report will fulfill the requirements outlined for the Council in NRS 417.0195.

The Council was initially created through an Executive Order signed by Governor Sandoval in 2012. It is made up of local, state, and federal leaders throughout Nevada and is tasked with identifying ways to increase collaboration between local, state, and federal agencies and identify legislative recommendations to improve services to veterans, service members, and their families. The Council meets quarterly.

The recommendations developed by the Council at the end of this report are focused entirely on issues related to veteran employment. To paraphrase the “guiding principles” developed and embraced by the Council, employment is crucial to successful reintegration of returning service members and existing veterans, and their military skills and training should allow them to transition successfully back into civilian society. This is particularly important due to the fact that many service members have been removed from the civilian workforce for years and are therefore at a considerable disadvantage.

In addition to these principles, the Council chose to focus on employment issues for several other reasons as well. First, the report made by the Student Veterans Advisory Council developed recommendations for the education focus area of the Green Zone Initiative, while the Veterans Suicide Prevention Council developed recommendations for the wellness focus area, leaving only the employment focus area. Second, at the 2014 Veterans Legislative Symposium in Reno, Nevada, where leaders and members of the veteran community gathered to develop and prioritize recommendations for the upcoming legislative session, participants voted to make veterans licensure reciprocity the fifth priority overall, veteran hiring preferences at the county and municipal level the thirteenth priority overall, and they voted to make a general focus on veteran employment the fourteenth priority overall. Finally, Governor Sandoval signed Executive Order 2014-02, which required the Nevada Department of Veterans Services to develop employment recommendations for his consideration ahead of the next Legislative Session, which this report aims to fulfill as well.

Though the recommendations below all focus on veteran employment, individually they examine the issue from various angles. They attempt to provide opportunities and incentives for private sector employers to hire veterans; they attempt to remove barriers to entry for public sector employment; and they attempt to improve coordination of services and service delivery as well. As with many of the reports gathered by the various veteran councils, they also reflect a deep interest in data gathering and sharing so as to measure the success of these recommendations and to develop future recommendations as well.

The Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs is proud to produce this report. As the body that developed and approved the initial four documents establishing the Green Zone Initiative, developing these recommendations is merely the next step towards achieving that initial vision. Future steps will be required as well to ensure that those who serve our country have every opportunity to successfully reintegrate upon their return.
Guiding principles: As derived from the Governor’s strategic priorities, the employment objective of the Green Zone Initiative states “service members, veterans, their families, and the families of the fallen are competitive for high quality jobs and stable employment after their transition out of service.” Accordingly, the guiding principles of the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs are:

- In order to become the most military- and veteran-friendly state in the nation, the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs will focus on providing ways to streamline the transition process for veterans seeking employment.
- Employment is central to the successful transition of service members and their families into Nevada communities.
- Due to their absence from the civilian workforce, the need to move often, and other factors, service members and their families face unique challenges when transitioning into the civilian workforce.
- Because of their life experience, military training, and leadership skills, veterans should be considered an enormous benefit to our workforce.

Background: In 2012, the United States had been at war in Iraq and Afghanistan for nearly a decade. Though the war in Iraq looked to be winding down, Afghanistan was quickly becoming the longest war in the nation’s history. Whatever happened in either theater, the State of Nevada looked to assist in the reintegration of returning veterans through various initiatives, including the Green Zone Initiative (GZI) and the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs (Council).

The GZI is The Nevada Department of Veterans Services’ (NDVS) main effort to marshal all available resources in the areas of wellness, education, and employment for Nevada’s veterans. It is a statewide strategic planning initiative designed to improve services to Nevada’s service members, veterans, and their families, to increase collaboration among service providers, and to provide a roadmap for ways to improve the current offering of services to policymakers, non-profit funders, and other members of the statewide community. It is augmented by a statewide infrastructure, including the Council.

The Council is a statewide working group aimed at identifying statewide resources, creating efficiencies in local, state, and federal government services as well as the non-profit sector, and establishing an action plan for moving forward. The Council was originally created by Governor Sandoval through Executive Order 2012-15, and consisted of thirteen Governor’s appointees: ten appointees were members of the Governor’s cabinet, one appointee was the Director of the federal VA’s Regional Office, one was a representative from local government, and one is a representative of the non-profit community.

Following a successful series of meetings in 2012 and 2013, the Council created by Executive Order 2012-15 discontinued and a new version created by Assembly Bill 58 during the 77th Legislative Session began. The new version has very much the same duties and responsibility as the previous version, and its duties are outlined as follows. The members of the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs shall:

- Identify and prioritize the needs of veterans and servicemen and servicewomen and their families in this State.
- Study the coordination of the efforts of the Federal Government, State Government, local governments and private entities to meet the needs of veterans and servicemen and servicewomen and their families in this State.
On or before February 15 of each year, submit a report concerning the activities of the Council during the preceding calendar year and any recommendations of the Council to the Governor and the Director of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

The membership for the ICVA is also created in statute. A listing of members and detailed biographical information can be found in Appendix A of this report.

The quarterly meetings to date during the statutory phase of the ICVA began in December of 2013. The primary objective of the first meeting was to finalize and approve the report structure for the report due to the Legislative Commission on February 2014. After fulfilling the Council’s statutory reporting requirement, the Council set out to approve the recommendations for this report during their March 2014 meeting. Subsequent meetings of the Council focused on refining this report and developing legislation from the recommendations below.

The findings and recommendations for the Council’s report are focused on all aspects of veteran employment. There are several reasons for this. First, the Student Veterans Advisory Council’s report developed recommendations for the education focus area of the Green Zone Initiative, while the Veterans Suicide Prevention Council developed recommendations for the wellness focus area. Second, at the 2014 Veterans Legislative Symposium in Reno, Nevada, participants voted to prioritize several employment-related recommendations, including making a general focus on veteran employment the fourteenth priority overall. Finally, Governor Sandoval signed Executive Order 2014-02, which required the Nevada Department of Veterans Services to develop employment recommendations ahead of the next Legislative Session. The Council aims to satisfy all of these requirements through this report and recommendations below.

2013-2014 Veterans Services Survey: On Veterans Day, 2013, Governor Sandoval announced the launch of an online survey opportunity for service members, veterans, and their families in Nevada. The survey remained available online until April 1, 2014, and consisted of a total of 15 questions, ranging from demographic data to prioritization of veterans needs in Nevada. The total number of respondents for this survey, 312, was nearly three times the number that responded to a similar survey conducted in December of 2012, which was used as the basis for the Green Zone Initiative Environmental Scan.

The 312 respondents represented various backgrounds. Nearly 90% (275) were veterans, 4.9% (15) identified themselves as active duty service members, 2.61% (8) identified as a spouse of a veteran, and 2.61% (8) identified as neither a veteran nor a dependent of a veteran. Nearly 90% served in the Active Army, Navy Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard, with nearly 10% serving in the Guard or Reserve components, the vast majority of whom serving since the Vietnam War era. Of the respondents who answered, nearly two-thirds identified as serving in a combat or war zone.

Focusing generally on federal benefits, the survey began by asking participants about their general knowledge of the benefits for which they are eligible, which allows the State of Nevada to ascertain how well various organizations and agencies are doing in making their services known to veterans. Over half of the respondents said they knew a lot about their benefits or at least had some knowledge regarding the benefits available to them. In addition, 66% said that they actively looked for VA health care benefits, while 33% said they looked for benefits including home loans, life insurance, education benefits, or burial/interment benefits.

In order to get a better idea of some of the challenges that veterans face in obtaining their benefits, the survey also included a free response section in which veterans could identify some of the biggest obstacles they face. Some of the popular trends that were discovered in the responses include long wait times or inadequate staffing (28%), unresponsive or unfriendly customer service (18%), and that the process to obtain benefits is confusing (17%). Other trends included challenges in obtaining education benefits, dental benefits, and that the physical locations of some VA service offices are inconvenient.
In response to a question specifically related to health care benefits, an average of 47% of the participants agreed that health care benefits for veterans are available, while 30% replied that health care was not applicable to them. This suggests that a majority of veterans who actively sought out health care benefits were either eligible for benefits or were aware that they could pursue them. However, the other 23% of the participants, or nearly one in every four, disagreed that health care benefits were available to them. This may be in part due to the eligibility requirements that VA health care has as it applies to veterans who make over the maximum annual income allowed.

A question about the availability of dental benefits was also provided on the survey, in which 80% of the participants agreed that dental benefits are either unavailable or not applicable to them. The reason for this unusually high percentage is most likely due to the strict qualifications that the VA has in place for dental benefits, which requires veterans to have a 100% service-connected disability, a documented mouth or jaw injury while in the military, or that the veteran is a former prisoner of war in order to be eligible. In addition, 26% said that the quality of dental services is of good quality, while 24% said that the quality is poor.

The survey participants were also asked to give their feedback regarding VA employment services and/or transition services that are offered in Nevada, which include job fairs, integration services for returning veterans, mentoring and job opportunities, and resume and interview preparation. When taking all of these services into account, an average of 33% of the participants said that these services were accessible, 24% said the services were inaccessible, and 43% replied “not applicable.” Moreover, an average of 38% of the participants agreed that these services were not plentiful enough or were unavailable due to economic constraints. A chart depicting the individual percentages to these questions is included below.
As the American involvement in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan comes to an end, it is likely that there will be a drastic increase in veterans who are pursuing their education using VA benefits. An average of 47% of the survey participants indicated that they agree or strongly agree that education benefits are available to them, while 31% stated that education benefits were not applicable to them. Veterans also indicated that some of their concerns with respect to education benefits included concerns about out-of-state tuition costs (26%) as well as confusion over the specific education benefits that apply to them.

Finally, veterans were asked to respond to a number of additional resources that they thought would be most useful in the State of Nevada. By far, the resource that received the highest percentage of responses was for a “one-stop-shop” for information (76%), which suggests that veterans have difficulty in accessing available resources or obtaining information for said resources. This also agrees with other statistics found in the survey in which veterans have expressed their frustrations or confusion when it comes to obtaining veteran services and benefits.

Other services that received a high percentage of responses include legal services (61%), a homeless shelter for veterans (55%), rural service centers (54%) and transportation to service providers (52%). The statistics and data related to this question can be seen below.
Q13 If it were possible to bring additional resources to Nevada, in your opinion, which of the items below would be most helpful?

Answered: 236  Skipped: 78

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Most helpful</th>
<th>Somewhat helpful</th>
<th>Not necessary</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Average Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homeless veterans shelter</td>
<td>55.51%</td>
<td>29.96%</td>
<td>7.05%</td>
<td>7.49%</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Nevada nursing home</td>
<td>44.06%</td>
<td>34.22%</td>
<td>2.67%</td>
<td>19.11%</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterans Business Outreach Center</td>
<td>50.88%</td>
<td>34.96%</td>
<td>4.87%</td>
<td>9.29%</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education Resource Center</td>
<td>45.95%</td>
<td>42.34%</td>
<td>4.95%</td>
<td>6.76%</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One stop shop for information about available benefits</td>
<td>76.52%</td>
<td>15.65%</td>
<td>5.22%</td>
<td>2.01%</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation to service providers</td>
<td>52.23%</td>
<td>32.59%</td>
<td>7.59%</td>
<td>7.59%</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural service centers</td>
<td>53.78%</td>
<td>20.33%</td>
<td>5.33%</td>
<td>11.56%</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Services</td>
<td>60.96%</td>
<td>29.38%</td>
<td>3.51%</td>
<td>6.14%</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recommendations: Based on research and deliberations, the survey, and other information, the Council developed the recommendations below. These recommendations were developed in order to continue the initial progress established by the Green Zone Initiative, particularly as it pertained to employment aspects of veteran reintegration. Although the recommendations below can be seen as stand-alone items, they are intended to be considered together in order to provide a more holistic approach.

A. Changes to the Nevada Veterans Hiring Preference and Incentives Programs

Employment is a crucial element of veteran reintegration. Returning veterans have often spent two, four, ten, or more years outside of civilian employment and are often forced to start over at the entry level upon returning from their military service. There are multiple ways of addressing this issue, but two prominent approaches can come through the development of a robust “veterans preference” program, and through incentives for employers to hire veterans.

A veteran employment preference simply means that the employer, public or private, may favor a veteran when filling opportunities for employment. There are varying types of preferences, from direct hire opportunities to point advantages when rank-ordered lists of applicants are involved. Nevada currently has a relatively limited veterans preference in statute.

Nevada’s current veterans preference is limited to state employment, at least formally. As outlined in NRS 284.260, the preference is only in effect when a “list of eligible persons” is compiled to fill a position, which is often done when a test is required for the position. For those positions that require a test, a 10-point advantage is added for the applicant if he or she is a veteran with service-connected disabilities. For a veteran who does not have a service-connected disability, or widow or widower of a veteran, a five-point advantage is added to the applicants passing grade. This provision is for open, competitive examinations or a single promotional examination.

While this is a generous beginning, it only affects a very small number of job opportunities, and all within the public sector. Meanwhile, private sector employers commonly ask if they are legally permitted to implement a veterans preference with respect to their employment opportunities, or if such a preference would constitute an illegal human resources practice. Both of these challenges present opportunities for improvement.

There are numerous precedents set in Nevada, in other states, and in the federal government that provide important examples for Nevada going forward. For example, in recent years, states like Minnesota and Washington have passed legislation allowing for private sector employers to legally prefer military veterans when hiring. While the statutory language is permissive, the law change informs employers that veteran preferences are legal and helps informing the broader public of the value of hiring veterans. In Washington, the law change also means that veterans can search the state jobs portal by filtering employers who specifically wish to hire them.

In addition to these efforts in other states, the federal government also has a program known as “Veterans’ Recruitment Appointment” (VRA), which serves as a federal veterans preference program. The VRA program allows for federal employers to hire veterans directly into federal positions up to grade level GS-11. For veterans meeting specific criteria—such as combat veterans, disabled veterans, honorably discharged veterans, for example—this can be a great opportunity to enter competitive federal service following service in the military.

While the State of Nevada does not have a similar program for veterans, a precedent does exist in the broader workforce and human resources arenas. Currently the Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation (DETR) manages a program called the “Ready, Willing, and Able to Work” program. This program, which was created by NRS 284.327, allows for persons with disabilities to be hired directly into state positions.
The statute reads, “to assist persons with disabilities certified by the Rehabilitation Division of [DETR], appointing authorities are encouraged and authorized to make temporary limited appointments of certified persons with disabilities for a period not to exceed 700 hours notwithstanding that the positions so filled are continuing positions.” The statute further reads that “a person with a disability who is certified by the Rehabilitation Division must be placed on the appropriate list for which the person is eligible,” and that “each such person must possess the training and experience necessary for the position for which the person is certified.”

In addition to not having a legal mechanism that allows employers to prefer to hire veterans, the State of Nevada also does not have a way to incentivize employers to hire veterans as other states do. The federal government has established the “VOW to Hire Heroes Act,” which, in addition to other provisions, provides tax credits to employers hiring unemployed veterans and disabled veterans.

Nevada has recently considered or approved legislation that, though not veteran specific, could provide a template in this area for the State. During the 77th Legislative Session, for instance, the legislature considered bill Senate Bill 172, which would provide incentives for hiring unemployed Nevadans, though not necessarily unemployed veterans. Previously, the legislature approved the Silver State Works Program, which provides up to $2,000 in incentive reimbursement or training allowances for new employees, though, again, not necessarily for unemployed veterans.

These findings and examples were presented to the Council, which then developed numerous recommendations for the Governor and Legislature to consider ahead of the next legislative session. In accordance with the Council’s guiding principles, these recommendations are intended to increase opportunities for veteran employment. Accordingly, the Council fully and heartily recommends the following:

**Recommendation 1. Make it possible for private sector employers to prefer veterans and their spouses in hiring, and to provide a function that allows veterans to search for these employers through the JobConnect Website.**

This recommendation calls for permissive language within the NRS to allow for employers to favor veterans when hiring. Using model legislation from other states, such as Minnesota and Washington, Nevada could easily make this change to statute. The latter piece, including a veterans preference search option on the JobConnect Website, could have a significant fiscal note so it should be considered a secondary priority.

**Recommendation 2. Provide for a deduction from the private employer payroll tax for newly-hired, full-time veteran employees.**

This recommendation calls for a tax incentive for Nevada employers to hire veterans in certain circumstances. New legislation would be similar to previous legislation heard during previous sessions, though this recommendation pertains specifically to unemployed veterans. It would have a fiscal impact due to the loss of payroll tax revenue to the state.

**Recommendation 3. Expand “Silver State Works” benefits for companies hiring unemployed veterans.**

Silver State Works is a program that provides up to $2,000 in incentive reimbursement or training allowances for new employees. The federal “VOW To Hire a Hero Act” provides an example of how Silver State Works could be expanded to apply to veterans as well. This recommendation calls for an expansion of benefits beyond the $2,000 incentive for veterans seeking employment.
Recommendation 4. Improve veterans’ access to state employment by creating direct hire opportunities similar to the federal VRA program and based loosely on the current “Ready, Willing, and Able to Work” program.

This recommendation calls for the development of a program that would combine elements of the VA’s VRA program and the State of Nevada’s “Ready, Willing, and Able to Work” program to increase opportunities for veterans in state service. It is in no way intended to force hiring authorities to choose veterans over other qualified candidates, but rather, provide veterans opportunities that they do not have due to their absence from the civilian workforce. It would have a fiscal impact.

Recommendation 5. Create a veterans hiring specialist position within the Department of Administration’s Human Resources Division in order to manage and facilitate veterans programs.

This recommendation is aimed to provide staff support for Recommendation 4, above. This position would be housed within the Division of Human Resources Management and detailed to manage veteran hiring programs for State employment and possibly even a veteran-friendly employer program. It would have the fiscal impact associated with the creation of a new State employee position.

Recommendation 6. Require vendors seeking to do business in the State of Nevada through State Purchasing or Public Works to self identify as having completed the online Green Zone Employer training program.

This recommendation would require that companies competing for State of Nevada contracts, either Purchasing or State Public Works, would be required to confirm that they had completed an online or in-person version of the Green Zone Employer training program, which would encourage them to employ veterans. The Green Zone Employer training program is discussed in greater detail in Section B, below. It would likely have a limited fiscal impact associated with creating the program and changing appropriate forms.

B. Changes to State Veterans Employment Program Structure

In addition to preference and incentive programs, other initiatives can also assist in improving employment opportunities for job-seeking veterans. In fact, to address a problem of such enormity, a holistic approach is required. Some of these complementing efforts could include addressing the structure of the State’s veteran employment structure, developing educational opportunities for employers, and tracking data to measure success of this initiative and others over years.

Currently Nevada’s veteran employment function is situated under the Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation. DETR’s Veterans Employment Services have veteran employment specialists at their JobConnect locations throughout the state. Though a state function provided by DETR, Veterans Employment Services is funded through a federal grant.

DETR’s Veterans Employment Services include services by both Local Veterans’ Employment Representatives (LVERs) and the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP). LVERs are employees of the State of Nevada who are co-located in state employment offices to provide assistance to veterans by supervising all employment services to veterans. DVOP specialists are also state employees co-located at employment facilities, but who have a special focus on providing employment opportunities for service-connected disabled veterans. Services provided include job referral and placement services, job search workshops, assessment and guidance services, labor market information, among other services available to veterans and employers alike.
There is currently a national effort to relocate Veterans Employment Services programs under the state veterans services agency, the Department of Veterans Services in Nevada. Texas, for instance, was one of the first to move veterans employment programs under the Texas Veterans Commission, and by all accounts they have been able to increase employment services to veterans in their state. The primary argument for this suggested move is that veteran services agencies have more direct interaction with the veteran community as well as with other veteran service programs. The primary argument against this suggested move is the requirement for the fiscal agency to provide detailed reports to the federal government, a function that the Nevada Department of Veterans Services does not have.

In addition to restructuring the State’s employment services programs, there are also other measures that can be taken to assist veterans in successfully transitioning to employment in Nevada. Illinois has created a “Veteran Friendly Employer” program, which trains and certifies employers who wish to be “veteran friendly.” In Nevada, a similar program was created thanks to a generous grant from the Nevada Military Support Alliance. Nevada’s “Veteran Friendly Employer” program is called Green Zone Employer Program and was supported by Executive Order 2014-02, signed by the Governor requiring executive branch agencies to be certified as veteran friendly. The program is housed under the Nevada Department of Veterans Services.

There is also a national focus on data collection with respect to veteran employment. Though there are federal veteran employment numbers for each state, the State of Nevada does not actively collect data such as the number of veterans receiving Unemployment Insurance. This information, if collected in aggregate and shared with veteran services providers at least annually, could be crucial in tracking success of all programs outlined in this report.

Recommendation 1. Move the Nevada JobConnect Veterans Employment Services function under the Nevada Department of Veterans Services or create opportunities for increased collaboration.

This recommendation is aimed to increase outreach and service opportunities for veterans by relocating DETR’s Veterans Employment Services function under NDVS or finding ways to increase collaboration through collocation. This would allow for better collaboration between the DVOPs and LVERs within the state, which would allow Nevada to come closer to providing “wrap-around services” to its veterans. There is a concern that NDVS does not have the required administrative structure to fulfill the federal requirements for hosting this function. It would have a fiscal impact.

Recommendation 2. Require the state to adopt the Green Zone Employer program as an official function of that program.

The Green Zone Employer training program is a function of NDVS, which trains and certifies Nevada employers as “veteran friendly.” This program could be housed under the State’s Veterans Employment Services function, under the recommended veterans hiring specialist mentioned in Recommendation 5 of Section A, or it could be a combined effort between the two entities. Because development of the program was funded by the Nevada Military Support Alliance, and it is an outreach initiative in line with Veterans Employment Services’ current function, it would not have a fiscal impact.

Recommendation 3. Require the Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation to gather and share aggregate unemployment data for veterans, to include Unemployment Insurance (UI) usage, to the Nevada Department of Veterans Services and the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs on a monthly basis.
This recommendation would require DETR to provide NDVS with a monthly report on the number of veterans receiving UI in order to provide baseline data for the efficacy of veteran employment initiatives in existence and developed through recommendations in various report. NDVS should also be required to use this data in their annual report, which is recommended elsewhere. Due to programming requirements, this recommendation would likely have a fiscal impact.

C. Licensure Reciprocity

Another way Nevada can help ensure employment opportunities for job-seeking veterans is through licensure reciprocity. Licensure reciprocity can mean several things. First, it can mean that a state licensing body will work to recognize military certification for transitioning veterans. Second, it can mean that state certifying boards and agencies will develop bridge programs and other mechanisms to streamline the professional transition for service members and their families.

Nevada is currently one of five states that does not have legislation providing for licensure reciprocity for military members and their families. Assembly Bill 349 was introduced during the last legislative session and it would have addressed aspects of this issue for the State. The bill failed to pass.

In order to address this issue going forward, the Office of the Governor, as well as the Department of Veterans Services, the state EMS certification body, the Board of Nursing, and the POST Commission applied for and received the National Governors Association Licensure Grant. This policy academy grant facilitates a discussion between five states and federal partners on how best to create licensure reciprocity opportunities in their states. Nevada’s team chose to focus on the employment areas of Emergency Medical Technicians, Licensed Practical Nurses, and Law Enforcement Professionals. The Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs is the “home team” for this grant, and its primary focus will be to provide recommendations to the Governor and Legislature on how best to improve the licensure process for transitioning veterans in these three employment areas.

To date, this grant has yielded excellent results. A partnership has been formed between the Board of Nursing, a nursing education institution, and the Department of Veterans Services to develop a pilot bridge program for veterans seeking to become certified Licensed Practical Nurses. Due to changes to statute during the last legislative session, the state EMS certification program is already in line with the national EMT registry standards, with the development of a bridge training program under way. The state’s POST Commission will also be identifying bridge and licensure reciprocity opportunities for returning military members to ease transition into the civilian law enforcement field.

Finally, many state licensing bodies are not required to have veteran representation on them and they are also not required to track and report the number of service members, veterans, or family members seeking licensure through them. Additionally, many advisory boards and commissions are not required to have representatives from the veteran population on them. Addressing both of these issues would also have an impact on overall efforts to provide employment opportunities for job seeking veterans in the State.

Recommendation 1. Provide a general requirement for state licensing boards and bodies to develop licensure reciprocity opportunities for service members, veterans, and their families holding federal licenses that are not currently recognized by the State of Nevada.

This recommendation calls for permissive language allowing state licensing boards and bodies to look into reciprocity options with the federal government with respect to transitioning service members. Assembly Bill 349 from the 77th Legislative Session was a good start, but models from other states could also provide examples for improvement. Because this is intended to be permissive language, this recommended regulatory change would not have a fiscal impact.
Recommendation 2. Change the makeup of relevant state certifying boards and bodies to include representatives from the veteran community.

This recommendation calls for adding a veteran as a statutory member of select state certifying boards and bodies to help ensure that the needs of transitioning veterans are represented. A more detailed look at this is covered in Section E, below. It would have no fiscal impact.

Recommendation 3. Change the duties of relevant state certifying boards and bodies to require them to share data regarding the number of veterans seeking and/or receiving certification or renewal if they have collected it through the application process. The information should be provided in the form of a report to the Nevada Department of Veterans Services and the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs on an annual basis.

This recommendation would require select state certifying boards and bodies to capture the data listed below on their applications for licensure. It would also require that they transmit a report of that data to NDVS to be included into their annual report. Due to programming requirements, this recommendation would likely have a fiscal impact.

Example data fields:

- **Have you ever served in the military? Y/N**
- **Branch(es) of Service?** (Check all that apply)
  - Army/Army Reserve
  - Marine Corps/Marine Corps Reserve
  - Navy/Navy Reserve
  - Air Force/Air Force Reserve
  - Coast Guard/Coast Guard Reserve
  - National Guard
- **Military Occupation Specialty/Specialties?**
- **Date(s) of Service:** From (DD-MM-YYYY) to (DD-MM-YYYY)

D. Public Service Internship Program

Service members leave behind their civilian careers in order to serve their country. They also leave behind opportunities to advance during their military service, and over the last decade, many have done so during a time of war. Service to our nation in uniform is currently voluntary, but one way to recognize sacrifice and the skills and expertise attained during that time by providing service members and veterans with opportunities for entry into civilian careers in the public or private sectors.

One way to provide access to entry for transitioning service members and veterans is through internship programs, apprenticeships, and similar opportunities. These opportunities allow people to gain experience, to become known within an industry, and even to see if a position they are seeking is the right position for them. Successful programs can be either paid or unpaid and still be effective.

Nevada currently has several unpaid and paid internship opportunities administered by agencies and the Division of Human Resource Management. The unpaid internship opportunities are available on an ongoing basis and simply need to be administered by the agency. The paid internship opportunities that exist are currently the Career Aid I through IV class and the Public Service Intern I and II.
Career Aids are engaged in performing routine clerical and support duties that allow them to gain familiarity and experience related to the classes for which they are being trained. It is important to note that these positions are not to be used for ongoing entry-level positions, but to provide progression opportunities for the next higher level in the series or transition into another class based on experience gained. While Career Aids are typically used in a clerical capacity, they can also be used in other occupational areas in some instances.

Public Service Interns are supervised position where a college student receives training, mentorship, and development through the completion of a variety of assignments in staff activities. Public Service Interns can intern in any occupational areas in State service. Public Service Intern positions can also be used when specific residency or experiential requirements must be met for professional certification or registration.

There is a key distinction between Career Aids and Public Service Interns that is worth noting. Career Aids are full state employees but entering at a trainee level while Public Service Interns are in undergraduate or graduate programs depending on their level. These differences provide increased opportunities for providing access to entry opportunities for transitioning veterans.

Recommendation 1. Develop the existing internship structure into a veterans mentoring program where public sector agencies work with the non-profit sector and the Nevada System of Higher Education to develop access and gain professional opportunities for veterans.

This recommendation calls for the creation of a fellowship program using Public Intern positions and working with the Nevada System of Higher Education. This Veterans Fellowship program would select veterans who are attending master’s degree programs, place them internships with state agency leaders, and shepherd them through a policy development process that would include meetings with state, local, private, and non-profit leaders. The fellowship would culminate with the Veteran Fellows participating in the legislative process. It would have a fiscal note.

E. Board and Commission reform

Nevada currently has numerous boards and commissions in existence. These are often advisory boards for public officials with respect to certain sectors, public interests, and other state functions. In addition to providing advice to elected and appointed officials, they also provide opportunities for public engagement through their open meetings throughout Nevada.

With the exception of very few of these public bodies, all of which deal directly with the Department of Veterans Services, these bodies are not required to have veteran representation on them even though they might have veterans appointed to them or might benefit from the same. Though these bodies often generate meeting minutes, reports, and recommendations, they are also not required to share the veteran-related information they develop with the Nevada Department of Veterans Services. Changing these two aspects of Nevada’s board and commission structure could dramatically increase collaboration and information sharing with respect to veterans services in Nevada.

Recommendation 1. Change the membership of identified state advisory boards and commissions to include veterans, to bring subject matter experts from other agencies onto existing veteran-related advisory boards and commissions, and to create new veteran-related advisory boards for veterans as appropriate.

This recommendation calls for adding a veteran as a statutory member of select state boards and commissions to help ensure that the needs of transitioning veterans are represented. It also calls for the
creation of several new veteran-related boards. It would have no fiscal impact. Identified Boards and Commissions could include:

- **Add a representative from the State Public Works Division to the Northern and Southern Nevada Veteran Memorial Cemetery Advisory Committees.**
- **Create the Women Veterans Advisory Committee with a member appointed to the Veterans Services Commission.**
- **Create the Student Veterans Advisory Committee with a member appointed to the Veterans Services Commission.**
- **Create Northern and Southern Nevada Veteran Home Advisory Committees with a member of each appointed to the Veterans Services Commission.**
- **Add a veteran representative to State Board of Nursing.**
- **Add a veteran representative (ex officio member) to the P16 council.**
- **Add a veteran representative to POST Commission.**
- **Add a veteran representative to Mental Health Commission.**
- **Add a veteran representative to Aging Commission.**
- **Add a veteran representative to Disability Commission.**
- **Add a veteran representative to Board of Examiners for Long-term Care Facility Administrators.**
- **Add a veteran representative (ex officio member) to nine DETR Sector Councils.**
- **Add a veteran representative to Housing Advisory Board (B&I).**

**Recommendation 2.** Change the duties of identified state advisory boards and commissions to require them to provide a report of the veteran-related activities, findings, and recommendations to the Nevada Department of Veterans Services and the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs on an annual basis.

With veterans represented on the boards and commissions listed in Recommendation 1, above, these bodies should also be required to provide an annual report to NDVS outlining their general services and their veteran-specific services. NDVS would then be required to synthesize these reports into their annual report. It would have no fiscal impact.

**Conclusion:** This report fulfills the Governor’s requirements for the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs, and a version of it will fulfill the requirements outlined in NRS 417.0195. It outlines the history of the Council, it provides detailed findings, and it identifies and prioritizes recommendations regarding employment opportunities for Nevada’s veterans.

As with many reports of this nature, the Council believes that the prioritized recommendations are the most important aspect of this report. As has been written several times throughout this report, the recommendations should be considered together as a group. While any one of them would provide for improvements with respect to veteran employment, the Council believes that all of the recommendations would combine to create the most good.

No matter what happens with these recommendations in the next Legislative Session, there will be room for additional improvements in future sessions. The Council believes that the recommendations in this report are an important and logical development from the previous recommendations developed through the Green Zone Initiative, and knows that future iterations of research, planning, and development will create opportunities for future improvements. The lasting legacy of this Council’s report, then, will likely be the call for more information gathering, sharing, and synthesis in the years
ahead, as this data will be tremendously helpful in identifying trends, gaps, and needs for future veterans.
Appendix A: Member Biographies for the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs

Chair—Caleb Cage is the Director of Military and Veterans Policy within the Office of the Governor. Prior to joining the Governor’s Office, Cage was the Executive Director of the Nevada Office of Veterans Services (now the Nevada Department of Veterans Services). There, in addition to leading the State’s veteran home, veteran cemetery, and veteran service officer programs, he helped establish the State’s veteran outreach and collaboration effort, the Green Zone Initiative. Before serving with the Nevada Office of Veterans Services, Cage served as a policy advisor in the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, with a focus on veteran and rural issues. A Reno native, Cage spent five years in the U.S. Army, with two tours in Iraq.

Co-Chair—Colonel (Retired) Katherine Miller was raised in Reno and served 34 years in the U.S. Army. Starting as an enlisted soldier, she culminated her military service with assignments as a military police brigade commander serving in the United States and in Afghanistan and as the Commander of the Department of Defense’s largest correctional organization. After retiring she taught college at the University of Maryland and the University of Nevada, Reno. She served as the Deputy Director for the Nevada Department of Veterans Services prior to accepting appointment from Governor Brian Sandoval as the agency’s Director.

Member—Brigadier General William R. Burks is the Adjutant General for the State of Nevada. As Adjutant General, he is the senior uniformed Nevada National Guard officer responsible for formulating, developing and coordinating all policies, programs and plans affecting more than 4,000 Nevada Army and Air National Guard personnel. Appointed by Governor Brian Sandoval, General Burks serves as his principal adviser on all National Guard issues.

Member—Bruce Breslow was appointed by Governor Brian Sandoval as the Director of the Department of Business & Industry in November 2012. Business & Industry (B&I) oversees 14 diverse State regulatory and administrative divisions: Athletic Commission, Dairy Commission, Insurance, Employee Management Relations Board, Manufactured Housing, Financial Institutions, Mortgage Lending, Housing, Labor, Industrial Relations, Transportation Authority, Injured Workers, Business Finance and Planning, Real Estate Division and the Taxicab Authority. Prior to his appointment to B&I, Breslow served as the Director of the Department of Motor Vehicles where he pioneered innovative solutions which led to an improved customer experience. Previously, he served as the Executive Director of the Nevada Agency for Nuclear Projects and as Commissioner and administrative law judge for the Transportation Services Agency under former Governor Kenny Guinn.

Member—James “Greg” Cox began his correctional career in November of 1981 as a Correctional Officer for the Illinois Department of Corrections. He received his Bachelor’s Degree in Political Science from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. During his career with the Illinois Department of Corrections, he was assigned to the Logan Correctional Center, the Lincoln Correctional Center, the Pontiac Correctional Center, and the Springfield Work Camp. During his 22 years there, he held the positions of Correctional Officer, Correctional Lieutenant, Correctional Captain, Major, Assistant Warden and he became a Warden in 1998. He retired from the Illinois system on June 30, 2003. In December 2003 Director Cox joined our Department as the Warden of Southern Desert Correctional Center. He was appointed Director of the Nevada Department of Corrections in 2011.
Member—Frank R. Woodbeck was appointed Director of the Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation (DETR) by Governor Brian Sandoval in 2011. In this capacity, he serves as a member of the Governor’s cabinet overseeing the daily operations of DETR which includes more than 1,000 staff members in several offices throughout the state. Prior to becoming director of DETR, Mr. Woodbeck served as the Director of Las Vegas Operations and Workforce Initiatives with the Nevada Commission on Economic Development (NCED). In this role, he was responsible for economic development activity in coordination with the local development authorities in southern Nevada, and for providing advice and guidance to create employment and training opportunities for new and emerging companies throughout the state. Additionally, he served in a unique cross-agency role as a strategist in workforce development with the DETR, specializing in green and renewable energy initiatives.

Member—Mike Willden has served as Director of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) since July 2001, first appointed by Governor Kenny Guinn, reappointed by Governor Jim Gibbons, and appointed again by Governor Brian Sandoval. He is responsible for oversight of the largest department in Nevada state government, with approximately 5200 employees and 29% of the budget. Mike has been recognized for his advocacy in human services by many organizations, including: Nevada Disability Advocacy and Law Centers (2004); National Association of Social Workers, Nevada Chapter, 2005 Community Advocate of the Year; and by the Foundation for an Independent Tomorrow (2005 Citizen of Distinction).

Member—A native Nevadan, Crystal Abba was appointed by Chancellor Daniel Klaich as the Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs in January 2012. Prior to her appointment, Ms. Abba was the Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs. She began her career with Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) in 2002 and has served in multiple positions including Assistant Vice Chancellor and Director of Public Policy. In her previous NSHE roles she worked closely with Nevada postsecondary leadership to identify and develop higher education policies and practices that meet the challenges of a changing state and the needs of its residents.

Member—James Wright’s 39-year public safety career includes experience in law enforcement, fire protection, emergency management, homeland security, and emergency medical services. Before Wright’s appointment as Director of the Nevada Department of Public Safety in 2013, he served as the DPS Deputy Director from 2011. Wright also served as the interim Chief of the Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security in 2011 and served as the Nevada State Fire Marshal from 2006. Prior to coming to Nevada, Wright enjoyed a lengthy and successful career with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) where he retired as the Deputy Director for Fire Protection. Wright is also a veteran, with service in the U.S. Air Force.

Member—Thomas Wilczek possesses greater than 25 years of experience in defense, energy, environmental, aerospace, and construction law, management, and engineering matters. He supported numerous mission-critical programs for the U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Department of Defense, National Nuclear Security Administration, and regional and local governments throughout the American West. He managed select federal characterization and remediation programs at the Nevada Test Site, Nellis Air Force Base, Tonopah Test Range, and the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. He represented the Nevada State Office of Energy in the advancement of renewable energy bills in the Nevada legislature and was registered lobbyist in previous legislative sessions.
Member—Sherry Rupert is the Executive Director of the State of Nevada Indian Commission, appointed by Governor Kenny Guinn September of 2005. On October 10, 2013, Sherry was sworn in by Governor Brian Sandoval as the first American Indian woman to be appointed a member of his cabinet. With over 20 years of tribal, public and private business experience, she possesses a strong background in accounting, finance, business administration, tribal tourism and Indian Affairs. Mrs. Rupert is a graduate of the University of Nevada, Reno with a Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration and is past President of the Native American Chapter of the University of Nevada, Reno Alumni Association.

Member—Troy Dillard was named director of the Nevada DMV in June of 2013 after serving as interim director since November 2012. Dillard previously served as the agency’s deputy director and chief of DMV’s Compliance Enforcement Division. Dillard spent 15 years with Nevada’s Department of Public Safety before moving over to DMV. As director of the Nevada DMV, Dillard manages a state agency with an annual operating budget of $93.6 million and a statewide workforce of 1,150 employees. Dillard oversees the collection of approximately $1.08 billion in revenue annually, which funds a significant portion of the state’s transportation program.

Member—Edward Russell is Director of the Reno Regional Office for the Veterans Benefits Administration, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. In this capacity, Mr. Russell is responsible and accountable for administering federal benefits to approximately 260,000 Veterans and their families living in Nevada and the California Counties of Alpine, Lassen, Modoc and Mono. These services total approximately $324 million in annual compensation benefit payments.

Member—Charlie Myers is the Chairman of the Elko County Board of Commissioners, representing District 2. First elected in November 2002, Myers has served on and led numerous boards, commission, and councils, including the Elko County Economic Diversification Authority Board, the Wildlife Advisory Board, and the Veterans Community Council for the Elko area. A graduate of Central Texas College, Myers is a retired U.S. Army Command Sergeant Major and a veteran of the Vietnam War.
Introduction and Executive Summary: The report that follows is the result of the hard work of student veterans and staff members of the Governor and Chancellor. The entire report, completed by the Student Veterans Advisory Council, is focused on improving veteran success on Nevada campuses. It contains a general overview of the educational landscape for veterans in Nevada, an account of their travels, tours, and other activities, and finally, specific policy recommendations for the Governor, the Board of Regents, and the Legislature.

The Student Veterans Advisory Council (Council) was created through an Executive Order signed by Governor Sandoval in August of 2013. Members represent each of the seven Nevada System of Higher Education campuses and one private institution. Following the creation of the Council, they gathered numerous times, over the telephone and in person, to examine the landscape student veterans face in Nevada higher education. They collaborated to develop recommendations based on their findings as well. This report fulfills the requirements outlined for the Council in the founding Executive Order.

The institutional recommendations developed by the Council at the end of this report are intended to be general in nature. To paraphrase the guiding principles embraced by the Council, each higher education institution in the state is unique, and they are encouraged to consider, interpret, and implement these recommendations with respect to their own missions, challenges, and opportunities.

The recommendations to the Governor contained in this report are intended to develop a structure to maintain the momentum developed by the Green Zone Initiative and continued by the Student Veterans Advisory Council.

The Council could not have completed its work without the generous welcome and extraordinary support provided by the institutional faculty and staff during the course of the campus visits. Not only did veteran and administrative staffs provide expert briefings, but also, in many cases, institutional leaders, including Presidents, Vice Presidents, and others were present to support the Council’s efforts. The Council found the institutions’ remarkable warmth and openness to be further examples of their commitment to serve veterans on their campuses and beyond.

It is the distinct hope of this Council that the findings and recommendations that follow will be embraced by all who wish to create a culture that recognizes the unique challenges of veterans, and works to accommodate their transition from military service. There has been a tremendous amount of focus and effort on the success of Nevada’s veterans in higher education over the last year, as well as a tremendous amount of progress. The recommendations herein are intended to continue that momentum.

Guiding principles: As derived from the Governor’s strategic priorities, the education objective of the Green Zone Initiative states that “service members, veterans, their families, and the families of the fallen have access to high quality higher education programs, and have the financial means to attend Nevada’s colleges, universities, and other degree-producing institutions of higher learning.”
Accordingly, the guiding principles of the Student Veterans Advisory Council are:

- In accordance with the Executive Order establishing our Council, we have made “topics dealing with student success” a central focus of our overall efforts.
- Each institution of higher learning in Nevada, state or private, has unique constraints, challenges, and opportunities with respect to carrying out their equally unique missions, and we appreciate that these recommendations will be interpreted, considered, and implemented accordingly.
- Every student population faces unique challenges and opportunities. It is not the intent of this Council to treat veterans as a special constituency but rather to develop recommendations that we believe will best meet student veterans’ needs as they transition from military service into our communities, workforces, and schools.

**Background:** Due to the enormous benefits provided by the various versions of the G.I. Bill, to include the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill, and the importance of civilian education for transitioning military members, higher education has been one of the three major focus areas of the Green Zone Initiative (GZI) since it began. We began by gathering data, identifying challenges and opportunities, and finally, developing an implementation plan going forward. Since that time, the Higher Education Focus Area of the GZI has grown in several important ways.

Starting in May of 2012, the Nevada Department of Veterans Services (NDVS) hosted convenings to develop recommendations for the Governor, the Board of Regents, the Legislature, and other entities to improve success for Nevada’s student veterans. Institutional leaders, student veterans, service organizations, veteran certifying officials, and others took part in the initial discussions. The first round of recommendations developed and published in the GZI Business Case in early 2013 are as follows:

1. **Orientation for Veterans:** This recommendation suggests that veterans in higher learning institutions receive a special orientation program that is separate and apart from their peers.

2. **Single Point of Contact for Information:** There are many organizations that serve veterans needs and this recommendation addresses a desire by student veterans to have a single, friendly, and informed conduit for information on each college campus.

   Because every university and college must have a veteran certifying official to process federal education benefits, this person becomes the de facto veteran staff for the school. Processing the benefits alone is a full-time job on most campuses, and it is difficult for the certifying official to also provide student veterans with adequate counseling or to develop new programs.

3. **Improved Information Sharing:** There needs to be a way for the various veteran service providers and veterans to communicate and stay up to date on information.

4. **Career/Job Mentorship in Public/Private Sectors:** There are several different possible formats for this, but this is a key to helping veterans find jobs in the civilian workforce after they graduate with their higher education degree.
The vision at the time was for these recommendations to be implemented throughout the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) schools, as well as in private and other post-secondary opportunities. Establishing the support of the NSHE Chancellor for these concepts was a crucial first step, and once achieved, it allowed NDVS to create a statewide leadership team that continues to meet to drive progress towards the recommendations, share ideas and best practices, and work towards making Nevada’s campuses more veteran friendly. To date, each NSHE school has approached these issues differently, some with increased funding from their institutions and others with grant money and volunteer efforts. Some institutions have formed new student veteran groups while others have used volunteers or allocated resources to develop veteran centers on campuses. Since this initial effort began, several schools have been recognized by national organizations as being military- and veteran-friendly.

In order to build and expand on these initial recommendations and successes, Governor Sandoval signed Executive Order 2013-09, which established the Governor’s Student Veterans Advisory Council. The Executive Order was signed on August 12, 2013, and the Council ceases to exist on May 1, 2014. It is the first governor-appointed student veterans group of its kind in Nevada.

The Council was established to develop a set of recommendations for all higher learning and post-secondary institutions in Nevada to help ensure veteran success in Nevada’s classrooms and training programs. It is made up of student veterans who are Nevada residents, as well as members of the staffs of the Governor and NSHE Chancellor. While there has been tremendous effort to help transitioning veterans from an academic and administrative perspective, this group was established to ensure that Nevada’s student veterans have a voice when it comes to developing policies and practices that will affect them directly.

Specifically, the Governor’s Executive Order requires that the Council “work to identify and prioritize the needs of Nevada’s veteran students within the Nevada System of Higher Education and other post-secondary opportunities within Nevada.” The order requires that the Governor appoint members, the Council meet regularly, and that it deliver a report to the Governor before May 1, 2014. Biographies for each of the Governor’s appointees to the Council can be found in Appendix A of this report.

In order to meet the requirements of its charter, the Council met six times. The first three meetings were held by telephone during October, November, and December of 2013, and the remaining meetings were held in person during January, February, and March of 2014. In accordance with Nevada Open Meeting Law, agendas, meetings, and minutes of these meetings are available through the Nevada Department of Veterans Services’ Website.

The initial meeting was held on October 15, 2013 at 2:30 PM, with the primary purpose of introducing group members to one another and to the larger statewide discussion of veterans in higher education in Nevada and nationally. Caleb Cage, serving in his role as chair for the meeting, provided the group with an overview of the Green Zone Initiative, the Executive Order that created the Council, as well as with other relevant materials. The group also agreed upon a meeting schedule for the end of 2013 and the beginning of 2014, agreeing that there was value in visiting Reno, Carson, Las Vegas, and Elko to see how each institution and area served their veteran populations.

The second meeting was held on November 14, 2013 at 2:30 PM. After Caleb Cage provided a brief overview of the purpose of the Council and the progress to date, the group launched into brainstorming recommendations for the Governor and the Legislature. The recommendations were broad in nature and have been refined in subsequent meetings for this report. The Council members agreed that an overview of the benefits and services provided by the State of Nevada would be a valuable addition to this report, and the compilation of those benefits and services can be found in Appendix B.
The third meeting was held on December 12, 2013 at 2:30 PM. Once again, the group engaged in a brainstorming and refining session with respect to recommendations and finalized the logistics planning for the 2014 campus visits. In addition, Mr. Bruce Reumann from the Commission on Postsecondary Education provided a briefing on his role as the State Approving Agency for colleges and universities in Nevada accepting federal education benefits.

The first in-person meeting for the Council was held in Las Vegas over two days, January 23 and 24, 2014. The second was held in Reno and Carson City over February 20 and 21, 2014 and the third was held in Elko over March 20 and 21, 2014. A detailed overview of each tour and meeting can be found in the section below.

Findings:

**University of Phoenix:** On January 23, 2014, the Council toured the main Las Vegas campus of the University of Phoenix (UoP). Paul Green, campus director, Michelle Nash, and others presented. It started with a tour of the new facility, which included the Student Resource Center, the Faculty Resource Center, common areas, and classrooms.

UoP was founded in 1976 in Phoenix, Arizona, and is a private, for-profit university regulated in Nevada by the Commission of Postsecondary Education. It offers non-traditional programs and classes, many of which are online. It is regionally accredited.

At UoP, students can begin a class at any time during the year. Each course costs approximately $1,600.00, all of which can be covered by the various VA G.I. Bills when students are eligible. For veterans, the academic year and VA payments start when the student starts. Students take one course at a time, for a total of five weeks per course.

UoP has a number of services that are provided specifically for its veteran students to include a veteran-specific job fair, career counseling, and a quarterly magazine. In addition, the university offers expert advice to students concerning payment issues with regards to the VA, as well as academic counseling to ensure that students are taking classes that are eligible under VA guidelines. The university has also developed a robust program to recognize military training for college credit, which ultimately saves student veterans time and money on their education. Finally, the university has built a paperless VA certification process for veteran students.

UoP recognizes military students transfer between campuses often and UoP’s structure allows them to stay enrolled. UoP’s class structure and schedules allow for numerous active duty students to attend UoP classes while deployed abroad in places like Iraq and Afghanistan. UoP also actively recruits and educates Guard, Reserve, and Active Duty service members who are using their military benefits. In service to their students, UoP also promotes “responsible borrowing,” which encourages students not to take out more loans than they actually need to pay for school, thus reducing long-term debt.

UoP has had over 800,000 graduates throughout its history and currently serves over 80,000 veterans worldwide. In Nevada, over 16,000 students have earned their degrees from the University of Phoenix throughout the statewide locations, including three in Las Vegas and one in Reno, in addition to access for rural Nevada students via its online programs. The University of Phoenix currently serves 678 students who are using their VA educational benefits.

**College of Southern Nevada:** The Council visited the Charleston campus of the College of Southern Nevada (CSN) on January 23, 2014. The visit included an overview of the college from Director for Student Life, Chris Brown (a USMC veteran) and Veteran Certifying Official Vanessa Robledo. It also included a tour of the veteran-related facilities on campus.

CSN is the largest NSHE institution in the state with 35,000 students, including three main campuses in Cheyenne, Charleston, and Henderson. CSN primarily offer two-year degree programs but
also offer a few 4-year degree programs. CSN offers small class sizes of 30 students or less, which is in
great contrast with the university experience where lower division classes are much larger in size.

CSN considers veterans to be a special population. As such, the college has worked to provide a
number of services to veterans, including three veteran certifying officials, a job fair for veterans at the
eend of every semester, new student orientation, public celebrations on each of the service’s birthdays
and Veterans Day, a statewide veterans writing project, and a one-stop-shop for veteran resources.

CSN has 1,200 to 1,500 veterans every semester using the G.I. Bill. For Fall 2013, there were
1,453 vets using the G.I. Bill, in addition to over 250 students using Veterans Retraining Assistance
Program (VRAP). The most popular majors for veterans are nursing, law enforcement training, and the
automotive program. CSN also boasts a Veteran Resource Center so that student veterans can receive
resources and counseling. There are plans to convert the current Veteran Resource Center into a
veterans lounge to allow for meetings and to make wait times for certifying officials more comfortable.

At approximately $1,350 ($90 per credit including mandatory fees) for a 15-credit semester, CSN
and Nevada’s other community colleges are one of the least expensive opportunities for studen-
tles in the state. The VA covers this cost, including books and fees, under the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill. CSN has a standing
recommendation to all veterans to apply for all other financial aid available to supplement G.I. Bill
benefits.

While a small campus experience is certainly one of the advantages of CSN, it has also created
several challenges in serving its student-veteran population. Specifically, the number of VA education
benefit claims have more than doubled over the last four years, creating an enormous amount of
paperwork for the staff at CSN. Moreover, CSN does not have a system for tracking veterans who are
not using their VA educational benefits, nor a system that tracks student veteran success at their
institution. CSN is currently developing a survey for faculty members to take in order to identify
challenges that the staff face as it applies to student veterans.

One of CSN’s future goals is to form a student veteran group. The school formerly had a student
veteran group, but does not have one at this time due to the relatively short time students stay at two-
year schools. In order to increase awareness of the veteran population, CSN is working on a way to
identify professors who are veterans to student veterans who are students. CSN is also looking into the
possibility of providing a veterans center on each campus so that the college can extend their outreach
to its entire veteran population. Finally, CSN would like to have a veteran-assigned counselor who can
assist veterans on all issues, which would be in addition to the Veteran Certifying Officials.

Nevada State College: The Council attended a presentation by Adelfa Sullivan at the administrative
campus for Nevada State College (NSC) on January 23, 2014. NSC opened in 2002 and currently serves
over 3,300 students, 136 of whom are student veterans (2.4% of student population). The college
currently has only one Veteran Certifying Official, Adelfa Sullivan, who is responsible for certifying all of
the paperwork for the college’s student veterans, as well as filling the position of the Admissions
Director and the Registrar.

NSC provides a number of services to their veteran students, including a newly formed Veterans
and Allies Club, which currently has six active student members. NSC is also tracking student veteran
success, noting that 16 veterans have graduated from their school. Additionally, NSC has a new Website
checklist for student veterans and is connected to the Nevada Department of Veterans Services’ Green
Zone Network.

NSC faces a number of challenges in serving its veteran population, many of which are due to a
lack of staffing. Since NSC only has one certifying official, that person must learn all of the aspects of the
Post-9/11 G.I. Bill, which are constantly changing. There is also no staff available to follow up with
veterans after they are certified. Additionally, NSC is only approved for one VA workstudy based on their
student veteran population.
NSC has several future plans for veterans at their school, including the allocation of a space for a Student Veterans club starting in 2015, specific orientation programs for student vets, and an academic advisor specifically for veterans. NSC has made tremendous progress toward serving its veteran population and its current and planned developments are in keeping with those trends.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas: The Council toured the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) campus and attended several other activities on January 24, 2014. UNLV currently has 1,256 veterans, including active duty and National Guard and dependents, and 922 use one of the available federal veterans education benefits. In order to serve these students, Ross Bryant (former U.S. Army) was hired as Director of Veteran Services in 2012. UNLV has two Veteran Certifying Officials and three regularly employed workstudies, one of whom is the president of the student veteran organization. Over the last four years, UNLV has been ranked in the top 15% or 20% by G.I. Jobs annual publication.

UNLV has a wide range of services available to veterans. They established a Yellow Ribbon Program to support student veterans, raising approximately $84,000; they developed the “Serving Every Returning Veteran” program to train faculty on military and veteran culture; they offer priority registration for veterans; work with a neighborhood apartment complex to provide affordable housing for veterans; and they recognize veterans during graduation. In addition, UNLV hosts multiple veteran-focused events, participates in special activities for veterans, has a veteran memorial on campus, and hosts job fairs for veterans once a semester. UNLV was also chosen to receive a federal VA Vet Success on Campus Counselor.

In addition to this wide variety of services, UNLV is striving to serve their veteran students even more with a number of goals and programs. Some of these plans include continuing to improve on existing programs, tracking statistics and information on student veterans’ success, and helping the UNLV student veterans organization to engage with veterans through service activities. Continuing to pursue these objectives will help UNLV provide even better service to their veterans.

Veterans Upward Bound program: The Council toured the Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC) Veterans Upward Bound (VUB) program on February 20, 2014. The VUB program is located at TMCC’s Meadowood Mall campus, which serves as a prime location for reaching the community and meeting the mission requirements of the program. There are currently fewer than 50 VUB programs around the country. VUB in Reno started in 1989 and has received 100% of its funding through a Department of Education grant.

VUB is designed to help veterans transition from the military into the higher education system. Some of the specific services that VUB provides include outreach and retention, remediation, advisement, support services, and social skills training. Since many service members put their academic pursuits on hold while in the military, VUB focuses on remediation as its key mission.

By hosting remedial classes, student veterans can refresh their knowledge of certain subjects at VUB before applying for college. More important, veterans are able to take advantage of VUB’s services without having to use a portion of their VA education benefits, which saves the veteran student both time and money as he or she prepares to go to college. When the veteran student is ready to apply for college, the VUB can also help them with beginning the veterans education benefit certifying process.

In total, over 3,000 veterans have been served by VUB. VUB primarily serves veterans who are considered to be low-income (based on taxable income) or are first generation college students. At least 2/3 of the participants at VUB must meet both criteria, while the other 1/3 of the participants must meet at least one. However, the VUB does not turn veterans away, even if they cannot count them in their annual numbers.

At a minimum, VUB must serve at least 164 veterans a year. Most of these students are within VUB’s target area of Northern Nevada, mainly serving students who plan to attend TMCC, WNC, and
GBC. In addition to classrooms at the TMCC Meadowood site, VUB also provides online classes so that students can remediate from home or from anywhere else. This is intended to address two of the biggest problems in rural Nevada as VUB sees them, education and transportation.

**Truckee Meadows Community College:** The Council completed a tour of the TMCC main campus on February 20, 2014, which was hosted by Veteran Certifying Official Roberta Bickford (U.S. Navy). Ms. Bickford began the tour by saying that the concept of a “veteran friendly” campus should not only require a veteran enrollment process, but rather it should be a concerted effort between administrative support of resources, dedicated staff, faculty awareness of issues particular to veterans, and a genuine respect for their service. Currently, TMCC has nearly 500 veterans using VA education benefits in addition to other veterans who are enrolled without using their education benefits.

TMCC offers a wide variety of resources and services that are designed specifically for veteran students. Some of these services include veteran workshops each semester, Veteran On-Track workshops; priority registration; delayed payment for Post-9/11 G.I. Bill veteran students; VA workstudy students to assist with intake of new student veterans; various social media tools; and V.I.T.A.L. (Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership) workers who help coordinate activities, Reno Vet Center programs, and other efforts. In April of 2014, TMCC also opened a Veteran Resource Center where veteran services and activities take place. All of the activities and resources are also available to non-veterans and family members who are using VA benefits as dependents.

Although TMCC offers a robust array of services to its veteran students, it is striving to better assist veteran students. Some of the future goals that TMCC wishes to implement include a full-time veteran coordinator position; a full-time veteran academic counselor position; a veteran mentoring program; scholarships; and a way to track veteran success data.

**University of Nevada, Reno:** On February 20, 2014, the Council participated in a tour of the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) campus, which included a barbeque hosted by the Wolf Pack Veterans club as well as various organizations on the campus. The tour was led by Terina Caserto, UNR’s Director of Veterans Services.

In order to best serve its veteran population at UNR, which consists of over 500 veteran students, the staffing structure consists of a Director of Veterans Services, a certifying official, one 80% employment position (32 hours/week), and three work-studies. In addition, UNR has been innovative in developing a graduate assistant program, in which a graduate student can pursue his or her Master’s degree while also working in the program. The current graduate assistant at UNR is also a veteran.

UNR is constantly trying to improve its services and facilities in order to better serve veterans. In 2015, the UNR Veterans Lounge will be built on campus. While it is called a “lounge,” the workspace will actually house the VA workstudy employees, a veteran service officer, V.I.T.A.L. and other service providers, and it will also be collocated with tutoring and all other student services. All programs will be developed around the lounge to ensure that student veterans are able to grow in all positions and to see how the greater workforce operates.

While the lounge is a positive step forward in serving veterans on campus, UNR’s main focus is on welcoming veteran students and ensuring that they are successful while attending college. In order to facilitate academic success on campus, UNR has instituted mandatory in-take meetings, GPA meetings, mid-semester check-ins, liaising with college deans, and advocating for student veterans who might be struggling in courses.

Additionally, UNR has developed a number of efforts that are designed to assist veteran students. Some of these efforts include a warm handoff from WNC and TMCC when continuing their education at UNR; V.I.T.A.L. workers who help coordinate activities; multiple veteran clubs; a
mentorship program using workstudy employees; a veterans internship program; and a paperless certification process for processing education benefits.

UNR has future goals for veteran services as well. These include improved social media usage, transfer programs for students coming in from other schools, data gathering to track student success, priority registration, and a peer-to-peer mentoring program for veterans.

Western Nevada College: The Council began their tour of Western Nevada College (WNC) with a presentation by President Chester Burton (U.S. Navy). In his presentation, President Burton emphasized how important it is to fully support the veterans on campus. He stated that his goal is to make WNC the place veterans think of when they look for a place to start their post-career education. Currently, there are approximately 150 student veterans attending WNC.

After the presentation made by President Burton, Kevin Burns (U.S. Marine Corps) provided a presentation of the veteran services offered at WNC. Kevin is the volunteer veterans program coordinator on campus and he works with the certifying officials, the VA workstudy employees, and the student veterans group. Additionally, there is a dedicated social worker to assist veterans once a week. Workstudy employees are also used at intake to ensure that a student veteran is the first person to interact with an incoming veteran student.

WNC is not only concerned about providing veterans with a dedicated staff, but also about providing veterans with the resources they need to succeed. Last year, they opened the Veterans Resource Center, which they believe is the first major step towards increasing services to veterans on campus. One of the many services offered by the Veterans Resource Center is a textbook lending library.

Administratively, WNC helps veterans through a number of services. To begin with, WNC holds veterans-only orientations and offers priority registration for veterans. Since the processing of VA education benefits is one of the main hurdles that veteran students have to jump through, WNC will forego payment until the VA authorizes it in order to ensure that eligible students can begin their courses.

WNC also encourages its veterans to become involved in community activities. Currently, the WNC Veterans Club is working with outside groups in the community in order to raise awareness of veterans issues and to build network. By working with veterans on their campuses in Gardnerville and Fallon, veterans are developing lasting relationships that extend throughout the state.

There is also a strong community involvement on-campus at WNC. The “veterans cohort” program is a place where student veterans can meet each other on campus as they learn teamwork, study skills, and more. The program offers assistance to those veterans who have low test scores, as those students are sent through a series of introductory math and English courses as a group. In conclusion of the tour, the Council also had the privilege of watching a powerful presentation on the Always Lost program, which was created by and is hosted at WNC.

Great Basin College: The Council toured the Elko campus of Great Basin College (GBC) on March 20, 2014. The visit included an overview of the college from President Mark Curtis and Vice President of Student Services Lynn Mahlberg. Veteran Certifying Official Tawny Crum provided an overview of the veteran-specific services on campus, along with members of other support staff and the Battle Born Veterans Club faculty leadership.

GBC was the first community college in Nevada, and one of the first two-year colleges in the nation to offer a four-year degree. They serve 10 counties in Nevada, 3,800 students statewide, and graduate approximately 400 students annually. GBC has one of the largest service areas in the nation at over 86,000 square miles.

Given their service area, GBC has student veterans at campuses throughout the state. During the 2013-14 academic year, there were 85 student veterans at GBC—35 in Elko, 26 in Pahrump, two in
Ely, two in Battle Mountain, nine in Winnemucca, and 11 elsewhere. As with the academic program, many of the services provided to veterans originate from the Elko campus. The Veterans Certifying Official and other staff travel to each GBC location at the beginning of every semester to hold in-person meetings with student veterans throughout the state.

GBC offers a variety of services to students and student veterans. The Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation operates a JobConnect center there, the Department of Veterans Services provides a Veterans Service Officer on a regular basis, and they have a partnership with doctoral students at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas to provide distance counseling for students. Additionally, GBC has worked with the VetCenter out of the Salt Lake City VA Medical Center to bring a readjustment counselor to Elko on a monthly basis and facilitate group sessions.

GBC student veterans recently developed a student veteran organization, the Battle Born Veterans Club. The Battle Born Veterans Club is an official club of the college and was recently recognized as a chapter of the national Student Veterans of America. Organized in February of 2014, the club already has 17 members and it uses the college’s distance learning technology to facilitate meetings between student veterans on various campuses.

GBC’s Career Technical Education (CTE) program is the most popular track for student veterans to pursue. CTE allows students to study in electrical, millwright, diesel, and welding fields, compete for extensive scholarship opportunities provided by local industry, and obtain an Associate’s Degree in less than a year. Due to the demand for these professions in the Elko economy, CTE graduates have a near-100% employment rate following graduation.

GBC has several future goals for addressing the needs of their student veteran population. In addition to continuing their high level of support and service, they are currently working to identify a location on campus for a Veterans Resource Center. The veterans club is also looking to increase its members, its partnership with local veteran service organizations, and its impact on the local community.

Las Vegas Veteran Town Hall Event: On Friday, January 24, 2014, the Council conducted a veteran town hall event at UNLV. Ten student veterans showed up, and although that may seem like a small number, it was rich with important perspectives: there were three female veterans and seven male veterans, which is an uncommonly high representation for female veterans; although all were from the Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom timeframe, there was approximately a 30-year age range in the group; some participants were National Guard while others were active duty; and some had been out of the military for years before coming back to pursue their benefits, while one participant in particular was separated from the Army ten days prior.

Most of the suggestions brought up have been considered by the Council and other groups throughout recent years. These include creating “safe havens” on campuses for veterans; having veterans as certifying officials; mentorship programs; reaching out to service members while in the military; expanding networking opportunities; and so on. Many of the participants were passionate about these suggestions, and all were willing to listen to discussions of successes and failures in attempting to accomplish these goals throughout recent years.

The Veterans Town Hall event in Las Vegas was a highlight of the trip. Although the establishment of the Council is intended to allow student veterans to have more of a voice on their campuses and within the policy process, the members of the Council are, appropriately, already very involved in student veteran services and subject matter experts in the same. This allowed the Council to reach interested veterans who were not necessarily engaged in the existing activities.

Networking event: The Council participated in a networking event to commence the two days of tours and activities in Reno. The event was held at Jack’s Café in south Reno and included a total of 14 people
who attended and networked for about an hour before the school tours began. This networking event was the first of an ongoing series of networking events to be held, although all of the events will not be held in conjunction with the Council.

**Prioritized Recommendations:** During the various telephone and in-person meetings of the Council, the group conducted several brainstorming sessions to develop recommendations to the Governor, the Board of Regents, and the Legislature. The recommendations, below, were based on the input of the experts who briefed the group, the personal experiences of the members, and the findings developed during the campus tours.

**Recommendation 1: Create a culture that recognizes the unique challenges of veterans, and works to accommodate their transition to higher education.**

There are various ways that allow institutions of higher education to set the conditions for veteran success during the education process and after. Although there are numerous individual approaches taken by each institution given its unique missions, resources, and populations, the Council found that there were several general best practices that resulted in institutions creating a culture that recognizes the unique challenges of veterans, and works to accommodate their transition. The best practices as the Council identified to highlight in this report are as follows:

- **Data collecting, tracking, and sharing:** In order to identify the challenges facing veterans as well as the resources that should be used to address those challenges, colleges and universities need to implement a data collection, tracking, and sharing system. This means that veterans need to be identified beyond a self-identified field or merely the group using G.I. Bill benefits; this data needs to be gathered and synthesized; and when compiled, the data should be shared with other agencies and policymakers who can be of assistance. See Appendix C for Florida State University’s sample report format for their data collection system.

- **Optimized staffing structure and in-take procedures:** Serving veterans in higher education is a team effort, one that is ideally made up of directors, counselors, certifying officials, work-study employees, and student veterans. Because of the various governmental entities involved, certifying veterans for their benefits can be a cumbersome process as well. While resources, needs, challenges, and opportunities vary from school to school the Council found that an optimal staffing structure and model in-take procedures do exist. See Appendix D for an example of description of what the Council considers to be the optimal staffing structure.

- **Early registration for veterans:** Early enrollment, which is the current practice of some institutions in the state, has several benefits. For those receiving G.I. Bill benefits, early enrollment allows them to secure full-time enrollment in classes that apply to the degree they are pursuing, which means they will receive a full benefit each semester. It also allows certifying officials more time with an early registrant’s certification so that there is a higher likelihood all of the student veterans’ claims are processed before the start of the semester.
• **A thriving student veteran organization working with volunteers to mentor student veterans:** One of the keys to building success among student veterans is through encouraging a strong student veteran organization on campus. Students involved in these programs can provide a network of support for fellow veterans, mentorship, outreach development, and program support for veteran activities on campus. As noted in the optimized staffing structure model, the student veterans organizations are best used in conjunction with workstudy positions within the greater veteran services office.

• **Training for school staff on military culture:** For non-veteran faculty members, understanding veterans in the classroom can be as difficult as acclimating to civilian life is for the student veteran. An effort to create awareness of the veteran experience among faculty members is of great benefit for both sides. There are three levels of training recommended by the Council.

  • **Level 1 training (Mandatory):** Institutional registrar offices should include Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) training regarding veterans in their regularly scheduled briefings.
  • **Level 2 training (Voluntary):** Interested staff and faculty should be offered an opportunity to learn the basics of military and veteran culture. There are currently multiple online training programs, as well as programs developed by NSHE institutions.
  • **Level 3 training (Voluntary):** For staff and faculty who wish to be an additional resource for student veterans, they should be able take an additional level of training and receive a door sticker or other symbol that identifies them as veteran-committed and willing to serve as a resource. This recommendation is based on the “Serving Every Returning Veteran” (SERV) program developed by UNLV.

**Recommendation 2: Create a body similar to the Council in statute.**

The members of the Council found the experience to be incredibly valuable and believe that there are various reasons to continue it into the future. These benefits include the ability to continue the coordination between the various institutions and their veteran services programs, facilitating continuity as student veteran organizational leadership changes, and allowing veterans to continue in leadership positions at their schools and on behalf of the Governor. The Council recommends that this body be formed as an advisory committee, that it meets quarterly and mostly by teleconference, and that it be made up of seven members and each member receive a two-year appointment. The Council’s primary mission will be to coordinate activities between campuses, create continuity for institutional student veterans organizations, and to coordinate an annual student veteran organization conference in Nevada.

**Recommendation 3: Move State Approving Agency from the Commission on Post-Secondary Education to the Nevada Department of Veterans Services.**

The three pillars of the Nevada Department of Veterans Services’ Green Zone Initiative are education, employment, and wellness. Currently NDVS oversees functions in the employment and wellness areas, but it does not have an obvious and specific engagement mechanism with the higher education focus area. Placing the State Approving Agency under the Nevada Department of Veterans
Services will not only provide that obvious connection between the two, but it will also help to ensure that the State Approving Agency’s activities are focused on serving the service member, veteran, and their families.

**Conclusion:** This report fulfills the requirements outlined in Executive Order 2013-09, signed by Governor Brian Sandoval on August 12, 2013. It outlines the activities of the group, it provides detailed findings, and it identifies and prioritizes the needs of Nevada’s student veterans. It also makes recommendations for further improvement, either through a detailed example of a veteran-friendly culture on college campuses, or through structural changes to continue these efforts going forward. As with many reports of this nature, the Council believes that the prioritized recommendations are the most important aspect of this report. The Council was careful to consider the unique missions, challenges, and opportunities facing each campus serving veterans in Nevada when developing these recommendations, and endeavored to ensure that the recommendations were general enough to be successfully implemented given those unique campus characteristics. Although some elements of the recommendations can be found in other publications and in practice at Nevada colleges, the Council is proud of the original recommendations developed in this report.

The members of the Student Veterans Advisory Council are pleased with every aspect of the process that led to the development of this report. Governor Sandoval’s leadership was crucial for the establishment of this body and will remain crucial for realizing the potential of these recommendations. Years of hard work and effort from institutions of higher education, from faculty and staff to administration, provided the impressive foundation on which this Council hopes to build. And financial and administrative support provided by the Nevada Department of Veterans Services allowed the Council members to travel to each campus, which was crucial to the Council’s success.
Appendix A: Member Biographies for the Student Veterans Advisory Council

Co-Chair—Renée Davis is the Director of Student Affairs for the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE). As part of the NSHE Academic and Student Affairs team, she works on all types of policy issues that impact students. Davis also serves as liaison between the system and the NSHE student body presidents. She has been with NSHE for 15 years, and, prior to the system office, she worked in student services on an NSHE campus.

Co-Chair—Caleb Cage is the Director of Military and Veterans Policy within the Office of the Governor. Prior to joining the Governor’s Office, Cage was the Executive Director of the Nevada Office of Veterans Services (now the Nevada Department of Veterans Services). There, in addition to leading the State’s veteran home, veteran cemetery, and veteran service officer programs, he helped establish the State’s veteran outreach and collaboration effort, the Green Zone Initiative. Before serving with the Nevada Office of Veterans Services, Cage served as a policy advisor in the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, with a focus on veteran and rural issues. A Reno native, Cage spent five years in the U.S. Army, with two tours in Iraq.

Member—Audrey Balzart retired as a Technical Sergeant from the U.S. Air Force in 2002 after serving for twenty years. She began her career in 1982 and worked Vehicle Operations at Luke AFB in Arizona, RAF Bentwaters in England, and Andrews AFB in Maryland. In 1988 she cross-trained into Communications Plans and Programs, first managing the Equipment Reutilization Program for Research and Acquisition Communications Command (RCD) at Andrews AFB. Her next assignment took her to Eielson AFB in Alaska. Audrey moved to Goldsboro, North Carolina in 1998 and continued managing projects as well as her unit’s deployment mission. She retired to Las Vegas, Nevada, where she now attends Nevada State College in pursuit of a degree in Visual Media.

Member—Timothy Galluzi is originally from northern California, he enlisted in the United States Marine Corps shortly after his high school graduation in 2004. After initial training as a Telecommunications Marine he was stationed in Twenty-nine Palms, California, with 2nd Battalion 7th Marines (2/7). During his tour with 2/7 he conducted two combat deployments to Fallujah, Iraq in 2005 and 2007. He then received orders to the Marine Corps Mountain Training Center in Bridgeport, California. While there, Sergeant Galluzi assisted in the authoring and implementation of the Mountain Communications Course, a course designed to train inter-service agencies and Marines to communicate effectively in Mountainous and Cold Weather Terrain. After his tour as a Mountain Warfare Instructor, Sergeant Galluzi received orders to Marine Wing Communications Squadron (MWCS) 28 in Cherry Point, North Carolina. During his tour with MWCS 28 he was deployed to Helmand Province, Afghanistan in 2011. In Afghanistan he served as the Telecommunications Chief, managing the telecommunications infrastructure for Camp Dwyer, Afghanistan. Sergeant Galluzi left the Marine Corps in 2012 and began his college career at Western Nevada College (WNC) in Carson City Nevada. While at WNC Timothy became the president of the Student Veterans Club and is as a workstudy employee in the school’s Veterans Resource Center. He will graduate from WNC in the spring of 2014 with an Associates of Science to transfer to the University of Nevada, Reno to work on a Bachelor’s of Science in Electrical Engineering.

Member—Zack Totans was born in Reno, Nevada on January 9, 1984. In 2005, he enlisted in the U.S. Army as an infantryman. During his military service, he was stationed in Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, from where he served two tours in Iraq from August 2006 to October 2007 and again from October 2008 to October 2009. He was honorably discharged from the Army in March 2010 at the rank of Sergeant and
began college at Truckee Meadows Community College immediately after, where he also worked at the Veterans Services Office. He is currently a senior at the University of Nevada, Reno, pursuing a Bachelor’s Degree in Economics and Finance. He has also served as president of Wolf Pack Veterans since July 2013, where he has dedicated his time to creating an environment for student veterans that can help them succeed in their life after the military.

**Member**—Christopher Nunez attends the College of Southern Nevada in Las Vegas, where he is studying to become a firefighter. Prior to coming to the College of Southern Nevada, Christopher served five years in the U.S. Navy as an aviation ordnance specialist. If his ambition of becoming a firefighter does not come to fruition, Christopher intends to reenlist in the U.S. Navy until retirement. He hopes that his involvement in the Council will introduce him to new opportunities and perspectives.

**Member**—Jacob Park was born in Elko, Nevada and has lived there all but the almost seven years he spent in the U.S. Army. He served as a light wheel vehicle mechanic and HEMTT wrecker operator in Iraq with the 1st Cavalry Division of Fort Hood, Texas in 2004 and 2005. After returning from Iraq he reenlisted and went to Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania where he became the maintenance supervisor in a legacy EOD Company. He served in Iraq with EOD in 2006 and 2007. Shortly after returning to Pennsylvania, as a Corporal he was chosen to become the acting 1st Sergeant of the company where with three soldiers and acting under his commanding officer moved the entire unit from Pennsylvania to Fort Stewart Georgia with zero deficiencies. He then remained the 1st Sergeant for another six months. Jacob returned to Elko in 2010 and is currently a full-time employee and student at Great Basin College. Recently he founded the Battle Born Veterans Club and is the current club president.

**Member**—Robert Papagno attends the University of Phoenix in Las Vegas where he studies in the Criminal Justice program. He served in the U.S. Army as a medic in several different capacities ranging from a line medic all the way to an administrative assistant to senior leadership. He and his wife have four children, ranging from nine months to ten years old.

**Member**—Jefferson A. Detrick joined the U.S. Army as a medic. He served 15 months in Iraq as a company senior medic and 10 months in Afghanistan as Senior Medical Training Sergeant for American forces coming into the northern theater of operations. In total, he served 12 years in the Army. He is currently attending the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, where he is pursuing a bachelor’s degree in Nursing. He is also the president of the Student Veterans Organization on campus.

**Member**—Ryan Gerchman was born in Reno, Nevada, and spent half of his life in Reno and the other in rural Pennsylvania. He enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in 2002 as a Landing Support Specialist. In 2006, he left active duty with an Honorable Discharge. Ryan returned to Reno in 2007 and is now a student at Truckee Meadows Community College, where he actively encourages his fellow students and veterans to engage in positive activities on campus and in the community.
Appendix B: Benefits and Services Provided by the State of Nevada for Veterans, Service Members, and their Families

Current Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) Offering for Veterans and Active Duty Military:
While in service, members of the military have access to a number of federal programs for tuition assistance. The centerpiece of armed services education benefits is the G.I. Bill, which encompasses several Department of Veterans Affairs education programs including the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill, the Montgomery G.I. Bill for Active Duty and Veterans, Montgomery G.I. Bill for Selected Reserves, Reserve Education Assistance Program, Veterans Education Assistance Program, Spouse and Dependents Education Assistance, and the Vocational Rehabilitation and Education program. Nevada’s veterans and military may be eligible for more than one educational benefit.

In addition to the numerous federal education benefits available to veterans and active duty members of the U.S. Armed Forces, the State of Nevada offers several additional benefits. These include:

Non-Resident Tuition Exemption for Active Duty Members, Spouse and Dependents: Active duty members of the U.S. Armed Forces stationed in Nevada, as well as their spouses and dependent children, are eligible for in-state tuition (Board of Regents Handbook, Title 4, Chapter 15, Section 3 and Nevada Revised Statutes 396.540). This provision also applies to active duty members stationed at the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center at Pickle Meadows, California. For active duty service members who have a permanent change of duty station to a state other than Nevada, spouses and dependent children remain classified as Nevada residents for tuition purposes so long as they remain continuously enrolled at an NSHE institution. Additionally, the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill will pay tuition based upon the highest in-state tuition charged by an educational institution in the state where the educational institution is located.

Non-Resident Tuition Exemption for Veterans: Veterans who were honorably discharged and who on the date of discharge were on active duty stationed in Nevada (including the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center at Pickle Meadows, California) are considered a resident of the state for tuition purposes and are eligible for in-state tuition (Board of Regents Handbook, Title 4, Chapter 15, Section 3 and Nevada Revised Statutes 396.540).

Non-Resident Tuition Exemption for Out-of-State Veterans: During the 77th Legislative Session, Governor Sandoval signed Assembly Bill 260, which exempts veterans who were honorably discharged within the two years immediately preceding the date of matriculation from paying non-resident tuition (Board of Regents Handbook, Title 4, Chapter 15, Section 3 and Nevada Revised Statutes 396.540).

Grant-In-Aid for the Family of a Member Killed in the Line of Duty: The financially dependent child (or children) and spouse of an active duty member of the U.S. Armed Forces killed in the line of duty while permanently stationed in Nevada are eligible for a grant-in-aid, a financial award that does not require repayment (Board of Regents Handbook, Title 4, Chapter 18, Section 2).

National Guard Fee Waiver: Active members of the Nevada National Guard are eligible for a fee waiver that will permit such Guard members to register for courses without a registration fee (e.g. resident tuition) (Board of Regents Handbook, Title 4, Chapter 17, Section 11 and NRS 396.544). This waiver will also pay for laboratory fees associated with certain courses. (The programs associated with the William S. Boyd School of Law, the University Of Nevada School Of Medicine, and the UNLV School of Dental Medicine are not eligible for the waiver.)
National Guard Fee Waiver for Children and Spouse: The child (or children) and spouse of a person who was killed while performing duties as a member of the Nevada National Guard are also eligible to register for courses without a registration fee (e.g. resident tuition), including certain laboratory fees (Board of Regents Handbook, Title 4, Chapter 17, Section 11 and NRS 396.5442). The child of a person who was killed while performing duties as a member of the Nevada National Guard may use the waiver for ten years after he or she attains the age of 18 or, if he or she enrolls prior to age 18, for ten years after the date of enrollment. The spouse may use this benefit for up to ten years from member’s date of death. (The programs associated with the William S. Boyd School of Law, the University Of Nevada School Of Medicine, and the UNLV School of Dental Medicine are not eligible for the waiver.)

POW/MIA Benefits for Children and Spouse: The child (or children) and spouse of a person who was a member of the U.S. Armed Forces permanently stationed in Nevada who has been identified as a prisoner of war or declared missing in action while performing duties as a member of the U.S. Armed Forces are eligible to register for courses without a registration fee (e.g. resident tuition), including certain laboratory fees (Board of Regents Handbook, Title 4, Chapter 17, Section 11 and NRS 396.5445). The child may use the waiver for ten years after he or she attains the age of 18 or, if he or she enrolls prior to age 18, for ten years after the date of enrollment. The spouse may use this benefit for up to ten years from the date on which the member was identified as a prisoner of war or missing in action. (The programs associated with the William S. Boyd School of Law, the University Of Nevada School Of Medicine, and the UNLV School of Dental Medicine are not eligible for the waiver.)

The Millennium Scholarship: Governor Guinn Millennium Scholarship recipients may access their awards for up to six academic years after their high school graduation date. However, for those recipients who have served on active duty as a member of the U.S. Armed Forces, an extension equal to time served, but not to exceed six years, may be granted upon appeal to the Nevada System of Higher Education (Board of Regents Handbook, Title 4, Chapter 18, Section 10.6.4 and NRS 396.930).

USAA Distinguished Valor Matching Grant Program: Nevada State Treasurer’s Office, together with USAA, has expanded the ability of Nevada military families to save for college through the USAA 529 College Savings Plan. Originally for families of recent Purple Heart recipients living in Nevada, the USAA Distinguished Valor Matching Grant is now available to all Active, Reserve, and Guard component service members. For Nevadans who open a USAA 529 College Savings Plan account through the Treasurer’s Office can earn up to $300 per year in matching grant funding, with a lifetime maximum benefit of $1,500.

Institutional Resources: Each NSHE institution has an office of financial aid whose purpose is to answer any financial aid questions students may have. In addition, each institution includes a veteran services office or coordinator who is the liaison to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for certification of your education benefits. They provide support for applying for and receiving education benefits, including submitting forms, certifying classes, and education benefit advising.
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### Most Common Area of Study

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### 20XX Graduates

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### After Graduation

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Appendix D: Examples of Optimized staffing structure and in-take procedures

1. The Director of Veterans Services is responsible for managing, organizing, recruiting, marketing, fundraising, coalition building, removal of barriers, mentoring, and program development.

2. Veteran Certifying Officials are institutional representatives who are trained and authorized to verify, sign, and submit VA documents certifying a veteran’s enrollment, change in status, receipt of advance payment, and any other circumstances that affect federal education assistance benefits.

3. Counselors can come from many sources—grant funded, federal support, or institutional resources—and cover a wide variety of support to student veterans, to include knowledge of non-educational VA benefits as well as access to other institutional and local services.

4. VA Workstudy employees are three-quarter or full-time veteran students who work part-time supporting activities related to VA programs. For example, they may assist with preparing and processing paperwork; provide direct assistance to veteran students; support VA, military, and state veteran services programs; maintain veteran-related files; coordinate student veteran organization activities; and more. At the campus’ request, the VA generally approves one workstudy employee for every 100 student veterans served on a campus.

5. Student Veteran Organizations are often peer groups affiliated with the Student Veterans of America and serve to support, mentor, encourage, and support their fellow veterans while coordinating student veteran activities.
Introduction and Executive Summary: The following report is the result of several months of meetings and deliberations of the Veterans Suicide Prevention Council (Council). It contains a general overview of the situation in Nevada with respect to service member and veteran suicide, accounts of the Council’s various meetings, and finally, policy recommendations for the Governor and the Legislature to consider ahead of the next Legislative Session. The data in this report as well as the recommendations are focused on achieving the goals of the Council and the many entities and agencies that supported its deliberations and efforts.

The Veterans Suicide Prevention Council was created through an Executive Order signed by Governor Sandoval. Members represent the Nevada National Guard, the Nevada Department of Veterans Services, the Office of Suicide Prevention, the Department of Health and Human Services, Veterans Service Organizations, and others. The Council is based on the efforts and successes of the Veterans Suicide Prevention Task Force, a less formal group that worked together to develop the initial action plan. Numerous initial successes with respect to service member and veteran suicide within the State of Nevada were achieved during the Task Force phase.

According to the Executive Order creating the Council, the purpose of the Council is to “work to identify opportunities and prioritize recommendations with respect to how best to reduce suicide among Nevada’s service member and veteran populations.” Further, the Council was created to “work towards increasing coordination of State government’s efforts to meet the needs of [veterans, service members, and their families].” The Executive Order also required the Council to prepare a report regarding its activities, its findings, and its legislative recommendations to the Governor by May 1, 2014, a requirement that this report aims to fulfill.

In order to achieve these goals, the Council developed several “guiding principles,” which were derived from the Governor’s strategic priorities and the wellness objective of the Green Zone Initiative. These guiding principles include a declaration affirming that suicide is preventable; they recognize the significant impact that military and veteran suicides have on Nevada’s communities; and they outline the characteristics of successful suicide prevention plans, including an insistence on a data-driven approach.

This report, and indeed all of the activities of the Task Force and Council phases of this effort, rely heavily on a report written by Dr. Luana Ritch in 2012. Dr. Ritch’s report, “Suicide in Nevada’s Military Veteran Population, 2008-2010: A Silent and Tragic Epidemic,” outlines the severity of the problem in Nevada, provides key focus points and recommendations for policy development, and serves as a call to action to the military, civilian, and veteran communities throughout Nevada. The report had broad influence within the State, and the Council is proud to be continuing in the important efforts that the challenges of military and veteran suicide demand.

The guiding principles and Dr. Ritch’s reports had tremendous influence upon the Council’s prioritized recommendations. These recommendations range from improved data gathering and communication with the military and veterans community, to encouraging universal screening training to health and law enforcement professionals, and increased state personnel to continue the efforts initiated by this Council.

The report you see below outlines efforts associated with preventing and in fact ending a serious problem within the state of Nevada. Much work and deliberation has gone into developing these
findings and recommendations. The Council is aware that others may have different desires and perspectives on the issues contemplated within this report, but asks that those wishing to address this important statewide issue will give each recommended item their full consideration.

Guiding principles: As derived from the Governor’s strategic priorities, the wellness objective of the Green Zone Initiative states that “service members, veterans, their families, and the families of the fallen have access to healthcare, mental health services, prevention services, benefit information, wellness programs, and community support.” Accordingly, the guiding principles of the Veterans Suicide Prevention Council are:

- Veteran suicide is preventable, prevention is everyone’s responsibility, and responsible solutions are always data-driven.
- Suicide among the veteran population is a major community and public health issue requiring a community solution based on public and private collaboration, awareness, and strong community support.
- A comprehensive veterans suicide prevention plan targets the entire community, is sensitive to the differences in suicide rates across the lifespan, and recognizes the varied roles different age groups can play in suicide prevention program planning.
- Successful veterans suicide prevention requires local action plans supported by regional, state, and national resources, coordination, and follow-up.

Background: The Veterans Suicide Prevention Council (Council) was established by Executive Order 2013-22, which was signed by Governor Brian Sandoval on November 6, 2013. Although the signing of this Executive Order was an important formulation for the working group addressing this significant statewide challenge, the effort began approximately a year before. The Council built upon this history, and the progress that was achieved was rooted in research, collaboration, and an insistence on bringing awareness to this difficult public health issue.

The effort to address veteran suicide prevention began in earnest, and through a statewide, interagency approach, with a February 28, 2012 report titled, “Suicide in Nevada’s Military Veteran Population, 2008-2010: A Silent and Tragic Epidemic.” The report, written by Dr. Luana Ritch, then the Bureau Chief for the Division of Vital Records as well as a military veteran herself, described suicide as “a pressing public health concern in Nevada.” Further, it noted that “Nevada’s military veterans, particularly younger veterans, are dying from suicide at alarming rates above the state’s already high rate.”

The report went on to offer an explanation for this public health concern in Nevada:

Today’s new veteran from active duty, reserve, or National Guard is often a person who has experienced the burden of the wars of the last decade. Veterans have endured deployments that disrupt life with family and friends even with unprecedented access to technology that enhances communication with loved ones. Deployments bring exposure to long periods of numbing routine that provides time to worry about crises occurring at home interspersed with moments of extreme violence and death.

As you can see from the above, the report discusses the unique exposure and risk for the current generation of veterans, but it also takes the discussion further. It shows how today’s suicide deaths among military veterans are connected to all other veteran populations in Nevada, and it highlights significant concerns and trends within the female military veteran population as well. The report includes recommendations that the author hopes will “result in efforts to control this epidemic”
through the creation of initiatives and “policies and programs and [actions] that will help control Nevada’s epidemic of veteran suicides.”

Dr. Ritch concludes her 2012 report with a “call to action,” asking “every community, healthcare provider, university, college, job training program, employers, supervisors, co-workers, families, and friends, every individual to take notice, ask, and help these veterans survive and thrive after the parade, after the homecoming.” Nevada must address this together, she argues:

We as a society must fulfill our responsibility to those that have carried our freedom and interests into battle. To not acknowledge their pain and having their deaths come at their own hand in the very communities they fought to protect is as if their sacrifice was never made and their service meaningless. Lastly, to have such injury occurring in Nevada communities is a risk to the health and wellbeing, if not the collective humanity, of the entire society.

“Suicide in Nevada’s Military Veteran Population, 2008-2010” received broad circulation and coverage, and shed initial light on how this important national conversation translated locally to Nevada. Not only did it focus the conversation locally, but it also drove the policy development process, resulting directly in the creation of the Veteran Suicide Prevention Task Force (Task Force). The Task Force was created through a joint letter signed by Director Mike Willden of the Department of Health and Human Services and Executive Director Caleb Cage, then of the Nevada Office of Veterans Services. Initial members included representatives from the veteran employment community, homeless prevention, veterans court, elected officials, the Nevada National Guard, the federal Department of Veterans Affairs, the Office of Suicide Prevention, and numerous other organizations.

Because of Dr. Ritch’s report and the establishment of a statewide initiative, the Task Force received an invitation from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Agency (SAMHSA) to participate in a policy academy in Washington, D.C. This policy academy allowed the group to come together, to develop a vision, mission, and action plan, and to start working towards its objectives. Following the policy academy, SAMHSA followed up with several technical assistance visits and regularly scheduled Task Force meetings focused on achieving the group’s objectives.

The Task Force’s action plan derived at the policy academy and improved upon throughout the year was focused on the mission of “ending suicide among veterans, service members, and their families in Nevada.” This mission received considerable attention at the policy academy due to its specific focus on suicide among Nevada’s military and veteran population, and also because it made the Task Force’s stated purpose ending this issue in the state, not reducing it.

The action plan developed several key objectives for accomplishing this mission. As with all action plans, the objectives were intended to focus the Task Force’s activities, and to help outline the subsequent action steps to be carried out by members of the group. These objectives are:

- Integrate and coordinate suicide prevention activities across multiple sectors and settings to increase awareness among service members, veterans and their families;
- Develop veterans, service members, and military families health and wellness (including mental health) indicator tracking and reporting system;
- Identify services, resources, and partnerships; and,
- Bridge resources to service members, veterans, and families and follow up.

Each of the Task Force’s objectives had an identified strategy, action step or steps, manager, implementer, expected outcomes, benchmarks, and completion dates.

Many accomplishments were achieved while the Task Force began work towards these objectives. Some of these accomplishments were major, spanning the whole state, while others were
more foundational efforts that allowed the Task Force to continue to successfully build and grow into the future. Some of the successes from the Task Force phase include the following items:

- Green Zone Initiative environmental scan complete;
- *Honoring Our Heroes* newspaper insert listing veteran resources published;
- Military culture training promoted to civilian behavioral and physical health providers;
- Standardized prevention training: LivingWorks model used statewide, safeTALK (suicide alertness for everyone), and ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training);
- Collaboration with Nevada National Guard;
- Chaplains ASIST Training for Trainers, mentor trainers and partners to deliver suicide first aid in military/civilian training teams;
- SafeTALK Training for Trainers and training roll-out with Nevada National Guard;
- VA behavioral health summit (2013) to increase collaboration and improve access to services;
- VA rural clergy summit (2014) to train clergy to identify and support veterans in rural communities;
- Annual Walk in Memory, Walk for Hope” programs hosted statewide with military members and veterans as the theme;
- Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Nevada Office of Veterans Services and Nevada National Guard to develop a plan to align their efforts under Joining Community Forces with the Green Zone Initiative; and,
- Statewide Peer-to-Peer efforts developed.

Another early success in this initiative came through the passage of Assembly Bill 29 during the 77th Legislative Session. AB29 established the Committee to Review Suicide Fatalities, an interdisciplinary group directed to study and review recent suicides in the state and make recommendations for prevention measures in the future. Due to the leadership of Misty Vaughan Allen, Coordinator for the Office of Suicide Prevention, the bill included a member of the National Guard and veteran community in order to ensure that this important perspective carried forward.

These accomplishments were remarkable for a relatively informal Task Force to achieve, especially in such a short period of time. However, by the end of 2013 it was becoming clear that there was a need to elevate this effort in order to achieve more of its goals. The Veterans Suicide Prevention Council was created in order to do exactly that.

According to the Executive Order creating the Council, the purpose of the Council is to “work to identify opportunities and prioritize recommendations with respect to how best to reduce suicide among Nevada’s service member and veteran populations.” Further, the Council was created to “work towards increasing coordination of State government’s efforts to meet the needs of [veterans, service members, and their families].” The members of the Council were appointed by the Governor, and represented many of the same groups as the Task Force phase. A complete listing with member biographical information can be found in Appendix A of this report.

In order to meet the requirements of the Governor’s Executive Order, the Council met numerous times. The meetings were largely held over teleconference from January through April in order to accommodate the many members from across the state and to meet the report deadline. A brief description of the meetings, as required by the Executive Order, can be found below.

The first meeting of the Council was held by teleconference on January 31, 2014, from 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM. After calling the meeting to order and addressing the administrative meeting requirements,
Council Co-Chair Misty Vaughan Allen detailed the history of the Council and its priorities and strategy. Council Co-Chair Caleb Cage then gave an overview of Executive Order 2013-22, its requirements, deadlines, and other expectations. The meeting concluded with a discussion of what technical assistance needs could be considered for future meetings.

The second meeting of the Council was held by teleconference on February 14, 2014, from 2:00 PM through 3:30 PM. Co-Chair Caleb Cage gave an overview of the report format as it had developed to date and then led the group in an open discussion on developing the Council’s “guiding principles.” The meeting concluded with a discussion on the report’s “findings” section as well as the “recommendations” section.

The third Council meeting was held by teleconference on February 28, 2014, from 2:00 PM to 3:30 PM. The meeting consisted primarily of presentations of three Council members on Council-related activities that were currently underway: Dr. Luana Ritch gave an overview of her report, “Suicide in Nevada’s Military Veteran Population, 2008-2010: A Silent and Tragic Epidemic,” which the group agreed should feature prominently in the Council’s consideration of recommendations; Ms. Jodie Gerson gave an overview of developments within the peer-to-peer efforts from the Veterans Suicide Prevention Task Force phase from her perspective as the Outpatient Administrator for the Southern Nevada’s Adult Mental Health Services; and Ms. Cathy McAdoo gave an overview of the Community Coalition structure throughout the state and how it might be best leveraged to assist with the challenges faced by the military and veteran communities throughout the state. The meeting concluded with an agreement by the Council to revisit the recommendation development process at the following meeting.

The fourth Council meeting was held by teleconference on April 4, 2014, from 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM. The Council went over the report as it had been developed over the previous month, agreeing with existing recommendations and developing new recommendations. They agreed to allow Caleb Cage to develop the report going forward based on their updates and recommendations during this meeting, and to hold a final meeting of the council on April 25.

The fifth Council meeting was held by teleconference on April 25, 2014, from 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM. Council members discussed the report as it had been developed over the previous three weeks and made necessary changes. Prior to the conclusion of the meeting, the Council voted to approve the report for submission to the Governor in order to fulfill the requirements of Executive Order 2013-22 by the May 1, 2014 deadline.

**Findings:** The 2012 report cited above, “Suicide in Nevada’s Military Veteran Population, 2008-2010: A Silent and Tragic Epidemic,” by Dr. Luana Ritch, clearly established the foundation for not only this Council, but also much of the attention this important issue has seen in our state in recent years. For the first time a report has presented the specific facts regarding military and veteran suicide in our state and has led to tremendous public attention, policy change, and momentum, with more expected in the future. Those considering the significance of this current report should absolutely read the initial report to gain a better understanding of this complex issue in Nevada.

In 2013, Dr. Ritch published an important update to her original report as well. In this report, a more condensed version than her initial report, Dr. Ritch covered the following areas as updated through 2012: suicide deaths by veterans status; a comparison of Nevada’s veteran suicide rate with national data; suicide rates by gender, age, and by type of death; and she updates her consideration of veteran motor vehicle deaths as well, which she also ties to risky behavior in her initial report. Finally, Dr. Ritch provides an overview of the state of the current prevention system for veteran suicide and offers a veteran-focused model that service providers at all levels within the State of Nevada should consider and work toward.

In short, Dr. Ritch’s report update suggests that the updated data for 2011 and 2012 “provides reason for cautious optimism” as “many veteran indicators have improved from the previous time
period.” Such indicators include that Nevada “experienced a slight decline in suicide rate” (see graphic below); there was a dramatic decline in female veteran suicide “while all Nevada females saw a slight uptick”; and veteran motor vehicle deaths have decreased as well. However, the data set used for this report update was relatively small, which can result in high variance of rates from year to year, thus justifying Dr. Ritch’s call for caution when drawing conclusions from these numbers as well.

Suicide Deaths by Veterans Status, Nevada 2008—2012

Just as with the 2012 report, readers of this current report are highly encouraged to examine Dr. Ritch’s update including 2011 and 2012 statistics. Future updates will include military and veteran statistics from 2013, though that particular data was not currently available in time for this report.

Prioritized Recommendations: Based on the findings in Dr. Ritch’s report and the proceedings and deliberations during the Council’s meeting, the Council developed the following recommendations. These recommendations are aimed at providing increased opportunities for intervention and support to military members and veterans in crisis, as well as developing ongoing reports of data to drive efforts similar to this Council in the future. Although they are prioritized recommendations, the Council believes that they are all extremely important and worthy of the full consideration of policy makers and service providers.

Recommendation 1. Require the Nevada Department of Veterans Services to provide suicide prevention information to service members, veterans, and their families via publications and email based on the data shared by the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Among the duties currently listed in NRS 417 for the Nevada Department of Veterans Services (NDVS) are the following:
• Assist service members, veterans, and their families in preparing, submitting and presenting any claim against the United States, or any state, for any compensation, aid or benefit;
• Aid, assist, encourage and cooperate with every nationally recognized service organization;
• Give aid, assistance and counsel to each and every problem, question and situation, individual as well as collective, affecting any veteran;
• Coordinate activities of veterans’ organizations;
• Serve as a clearinghouse and disseminate information relating to veterans’ benefits; and,
• Conduct studies that will assist veterans to obtain benefits.

NDVS is currently working with the federal Department of Veterans Affairs’ Office of Rural Health to develop a veteran database that would track various items regarding veterans, including contact information. During the last 77th Legislative Session the Legislature passed and the Governor signed Senate Bill 244, which allows the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to put a veterans designation on driver’s license or identification cards. Additionally, SB244 requires that the DMV “compile and submit to the [NDVS] each month a list of persons who have declared that they are veterans of the Armed Forces.”

The information provided by the DMV to NDVS will go into the veteran database and will allow NDVS to communicate with veterans throughout the state. This will allow NDVS to better fulfill its responsibility to serve veterans and serve as a clearinghouse of information, which should include information on resources for veterans who are in crisis. An additional recommendation that could be helpful to this matter would be to allow the DMV to provide this information to NDVS automatically, so long as the veteran is informed that their information will be shared with NDVS agency and will be used for official use only.

Recommendation 2. Require the State Registrar of Vital Records, Department of Health and Human Services, to provide a report on the suicide mortality of Nevada’s veterans to NDVS by October of even years and a report update by October of odd years.

The Council’s guiding principles recognize that responsible suicide prevention solutions are data-driven, and this focus is seen throughout the Council’s report, through the findings as well as several recommendations. Simply stated, this means that data should be gathered, analyzed and synthesized, and shared in order to drive resources, initiatives, and solutions toward the challenges surrounding veteran and military suicide. To do otherwise is to be reactive and not proactive, a costly posture when dealing with such a serious concern.

As has been mentioned throughout this report, Dr. Luana Ritch’s February 2012 report entitled, “Suicide in Nevada’s Military Veteran Population, 2008-2010: A Silent and Tragic Epidemic,” established the foundation for much of the work done by the Council. Not only did the report shed initial light on how this important national conversation translated locally to Nevada, but it also drove the policy development process through the creation of the Veteran Suicide Prevention Task Force. The updated versions of this report have been equally significant.

Dr. Ritch wrote her report because she happened to be both a veteran and the Bureau Chief for the Office of Vital Records, Department of Health and Human Services. Since leaving that post, she has continued to provide important data updates to her initial reports. This recommendation would require that whoever holds this important position provide a full report on the subject of suicide among Nevada’s military veteran population biannually, and a report update biannually, in alternating years.
Recommendation 3. Encourage Universal Screening Training for all medical professionals seeking initial licensure and renewal.

Screening tests are often used to determine the presence of any disease or condition, especially if the disease or condition could lead to death. While risk of suicide may not necessarily be a disease, it certainly meets the latter conditions. Universal screening tests for suicidality have been used to determine if an individual is at risk in order to offer opportunities for intervention, provision of services, or other immediate aid.

Universal screening tests for suicidality often assume that the existence of depression is the majority cause of suicide. Effective universal screening tests can be brief (four to 20 questions) and can be administered in various ways to match the need as appropriate. The goal of universal screening tests is to identify those dealing with depression and ensuring that they have the help they need.

While it could be legislatively required for all health care professionals holding a state license to receive training in administering universal screening tests, the Council believes that this is not the best approach. Instead, the Council is recommending the development of a universal screening test for health care professionals in the state and finding ways of encouraging the professional health care community to engage in the training. The Council believes that this will be a more effective approach in the long run, rather than a legal mandate.

Recommendation 4. Encourage the development of veteran suicide protocols for Peace Officer Standards and Training for new law enforcement professionals and update existing Crisis Intervention Training to include suicide protocols.

Law enforcement agencies around the state and country have long been intervening with military members and veterans in crisis situations. Combining a military trained person who is in crisis with trained law enforcement professionals can lead to dangerous and deadly situations. National programs have recently begun to provide law enforcement professionals with increased training on topics like awareness of the military mindset as well as developing unique strategies for dealing with veterans in crisis in ways that can bring positive resolution to the engagements.

This recommendation suggests that Nevada’s law enforcement agencies engage with organizations such as the Center for Deployment Psychology to receive training such as their “Managing Crisis Situations with Veterans” class. According to their Website, their “training is designed to educate law enforcement personnel about military culture, deployment, and reintegration and clinical challenges that veterans face including PTSD, traumatic brain injury, suicidal behavior and readjustment back into the family.” This training or similar programs can assist not only by providing real training to those who are often on the leading edge of dealing with veterans in crisis, but also include issues surrounding veteran and military suicide in law enforcement culture, doctrine, and training.

While it could be legislatively required for all law enforcement professionals to receive training in veteran suicide protocols, the Council believes that this is not the best approach. Instead, the Council is recommending the development of veteran suicide protocols for law enforcement professionals in the state and finding ways of encouraging POST to engage in the training. The Council believes that this will be a more effective approach in the long run than a mandate.

Recommendation 5. Assign one staff member in each Governor’s agency as that agency’s veteran representative.

Most agencies have employees who deal personally with members of the public, some of whom may be veterans or veterans in crisis. Most, if not all agencies also have employees who are veterans.
This recommendation calls for each executive branch agency to identify a single employee to be the agency’s veteran representative, which would require attendance at monthly meetings to share information, best practices, and resources, to receive Safe Talk Training, and to build agency policies and procedures for dealing with veterans in crisis.

**Recommendation 6. Add one veteran employee to the Office of Suicide Prevention to expand Safe Talk Training and develop veteran peer-to-peer program.**

The Office of Suicide Prevention is a small office with an enormously important mission. Over recent years that the office has participated in the Veterans Suicide Prevention Task Force or Council, they have provided the majority of the vision, leadership, and focus. They have also adopted the mission of the Task Force and Council as their own by training countless state employees with suicide prevention methods, hiring veterans into open positions within the agency to help further these efforts, and so on.

As most of this has been done because of the individual focus and dedication of the agency’s leader, Misty Vaughan Allen, the Council believes that the creation of an actual position will allow this important effort to carry forward into the future no matter what the organization of the agency is. That is, for these efforts to continue forward in a meaningful way, and for future initiatives to be developed organically, the Office of Suicide Prevention needs dedicated staff for military and veteran suicide prevention going forward. This position will have numerous tasks, including developing and managing peer-to-peer programs, managing grant funded employees, conducting outreach, managing the committee suggested in Recommendation 5, and more.

**Recommendation 7. Require the Nevada Department of Education to share aggregate data of military-dependent children with the Nevada Department of Veterans Services annually.**

Assembly Bill 224 was passed during the 77th Legislative Session. According to the Legislative Digest, AB277 is:

An act relating to education; requiring, to the extent money is available, that the automated system of accountability information for Nevada established and maintained by the Department of Education include a unique identifier for each pupil whose parent or guardian is a member of the Armed Forces of the United States, a reserve component thereof or the National Guard; requiring the board of trustees of each school district to take the actions necessary during the 2013-2014 school year to implement a data system which includes a unique identifier for those pupils; and providing other matters properly relating thereto.

The Council believes that this information would be extremely valuable if provided to the Nevada Department of Veterans Services (NDVS) on an annual basis. It is not requiring personally identifiable information, but rather the number of military-connected students at individual school locations. Much like the veterans database mentioned in Recommendation 1 above, this will allow the Office of Suicide Prevention and NDVS have a concept of population density of military families for the state, and to request and allocate resources accordingly. Together with the report suggested in Recommendation 2, these data could be used to test current solutions and to make future adjustments.

**Conclusion:** This report fulfills the requirements outlined in Executive Order Executive Order 2013-22 signed by Governor Brian Sandoval on November 6, 2013. It outlines the activities of the group, it provides detailed findings, and it identifies and prioritizes the needs for addressing issues related to suicide among Nevada’s veteran and military populations. It also makes recommendations for further
improvement, either through the creation of future entities to carry this work forward, or the tools to do so.

As with many reports of this nature, the Council believes that the prioritized recommendations are the most important aspect of this report. The Council was careful to consider the unique challenges of this issue in Nevada. Although the recommendations developed by the Council are significant and substantive as stand-alone recommendations, the Council believes that they truly must be considered as a whole to address this significant problem in Nevada.

Much effort has gone into bringing issues related to military and veteran suicide to the front of the public health discussion since Dr. Luana Ritch wrote her initial report on the subject in 2012. The Council is pleased with the outcomes and successes of these efforts to date, but also realizes that much more must be done to address this issue in our state. Accordingly, the Council would like to conclude this report by echoing Dr. Ritch’s initial call to action: as a statewide community, we must all rise to meet these challenges.
Appendix A: Member Biographies for the Veteran Suicide Prevention Council

Co-Chair—Misty Vaughan Allen, MA, is the Coordinator for the Nevada Office of Suicide Prevention in the Division of Public and Behavioral Health. She works together with local advisory groups and community coalitions, providing oversight and leadership to launch new suicide prevention programs in communities across Nevada. She facilitated the development of Nevada’s first Suicide Prevention plan consistent with the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention. Ms. Allen graduated with her Master’s Degree in Counseling and Educational Psychology from the University of Nevada, Reno. She began her journey to prevent suicide as the coordinator for the Suicide Prevention Hotline of Nevada, a program of the Crisis Call Center in Reno. Ms. Allen advocates for suicide prevention resources to help create change for Nevadans. She is the proud mother of Luke and Madelynne who assist her with suicide prevention events across the state.

Co-Chair—Caleb Cage is the Director of Military and Veterans Policy within the Office of the Governor. Prior to joining the Governor’s Office, Cage was the Executive Director of the Nevada Office of Veterans Services (now the Nevada Department of Veterans Services). There, in addition to leading the State’s veteran home, veteran cemetery, and veteran service officer programs, he helped establish the State’s veteran outreach and collaboration effort, the Green Zone Initiative. Before serving with the Nevada Office of Veterans Services, Cage served as a policy advisor in the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, with a focus on veteran and rural issues. A Reno native, Cage spent five years in the U.S. Army, with two tours in Iraq.

Member—Yvonne Betron served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1995-1998. She has lived in Las Vegas since 2000 and is currently serving as the Women Veterans Program Coordinator for the State of Nevada. She is also a member of the VA Women Veterans Health Committee and the UNLV Military Veteran and Family Assistance Council.

Member—Captain Mike Bordallo lives and works in the Reno area. He has 15 years in the military and currently serves approximately 4,900 from both Army and Air Force personnel of the in the Nevada National Guard as the full time Resilience Risk Reduction and Suicide Prevention Program Coordinator with offices in Reno and Las Vegas. Captain Bordallo is a combat Veteran of Afghanistan.

Member—Ross D. Bryant is Director of Veteran Services for the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He is a retired Army veteran and the current Director of UNLV’s Office of Veteran Services. In 2012, UNLV established the Office of Veteran Services to better serve its growing student veteran and military family community by developing a welcoming, veteran-friendly campus environment that fosters academic and personal success. UNLV understands the many challenges associated with pursuing a degree while serving on active duty, as well as the challenges associated with making the leap from the military to the civilian world. Working with the Student Veterans & Military Family Services Committee to meet these needs, the office is staffed with veterans and G.I. Bill-experienced staff to assist more than 1,200 veterans, dependents, active duty service members, National Guard members and reservists with answers to questions concerning admissions, G.I. Bill enrollment certification, financial aid resources, campus and community support services, local veteran discounted-housing programs and various networks for veteran employment opportunities. He comes to the Office of Veteran Services after a 24-year career as an enlisted soldier, NCO and former Army Officer.
Member—Richard Egan is the Southern Nevada Suicide Prevention Training and Outreach Facilitator for Division of Public and Behavioral Health, Department of Health and Human Services. He brings to his position experience in administration leadership, supervision, and suicide prevention for over 700 individuals. Mr. Egan has over 26 years in U.S. Air Force Munitions Systems Technology Career field, 24 years of experience and certified in facilitating training objectives, 10 years of experience preventing suicides utilizing awareness, prevention and intervention training and 2 years of experience facilitating training objectives to the public for Clark County Department of Family Services. He enlisted in the Air Force and reported to Lackland AFB for basic military training in July 1986. Mr. Egan retired from the U.S. Air Force in August of 2012. Sergeant Egan was reassigned to Las Vegas Nevada in August of 1998 where he his wife Pamela and their three daughters Kymberlie, Cheyenne, Emaleigh, and son Joseph now call home.

Member—Carlton R. Fogg Jr. is the current Veteran of Foreign Wars Department of Nevada State Chaplain. He served in the U.S. Navy for 10 years as a Hospital Corpsman (Medic). His assignments were with the U.S. Marine Corps as a Combat (FMF) front line "Doc" with the 2nd Marine Div at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. He attended Aerospace Medical Training at Pensacola, Florida, and then was assigned to West Coast Squadrons. He made four Deployments, one to the Mediterranean with BLT 2/6, one on the USS Ranger (CV-61), Diego Garcia (BIOT), and also to Misawa, Japan. While on shore duty at NAS Point Mugu, he was on the Presidential Ambulance Team when President Regan came to the Western White House. Chaplain Fogg has been an Ordained Minister for five years and he is currently the VFW Dept of NV Chairman of the Suicide Prevention and Awareness Committee. He is married to Andrea and they live in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Member—Jodie Gerson has been working in the field of Mental Health for almost 20 years. She is the proud Daughter of a Vietnam veteran, Grand-daughter of a WWII veteran and great-grand daughter of a WWI Veteran. Ms. Gerson started her career working at the Rhode Island Correctional Facility as a counselor. While attending graduate school, she helped create, build, and eventually became the Director of the Crisis/Respite program in New Haven, CT. After graduate school, Ms. Gerson spent many years pioneering the battle to end homelessness and HIV/AIDS for the population of individuals with chronic mental illness. She worked in several clubhouse programs, clinics and hospitals. After moving to Las Vegas, she served as the Director of the Migration and Refugee Program and the Intake Specialist at a local counseling agency. Ms. Gerson came to SNAMHS in 2005 as a Mental Health Counselor. During her time with SNAMHS, she has served in several progressively responsible positions including the Director of the Downtown Clinic, the Director of Community Services, and most recently the Outpatient Administrator.

Member—Elaine Alessandro Krows is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, working in the field of mental health and substance abuse since 1989. She works with adults with persistent mental illness and youth with serious emotional disturbance. Ms. Krows has worked both in inpatient and outpatient settings primarily in the public sector. Currently, she works for the VA as a case manager in the HUD-VASH program, which is the chronic homeless program with the goal of permanent housing for Veterans. Ms. Krows joined this Council as a member of the public. She is the wife of Master Sergeant Junior Krows, who was deployed twice during the Global War on Terror and will retire with 28 years of military service in August of 2014. She has been involved with the Family Readiness Group (FRG) for Recruiting and Retention for the Army National Guard.

Member—Councilman Al Litman hails originally from Duluth, Minnesota and moved to Los Angeles following graduation from the University of Minnesota. He entered the Army in 1965 and served in
Vietnam from 1966-1967, where he was decorated with a Bronze Star for Valor and an Air Medal for flying in numerous combat flights with the First Calvary (Airmobile). Following his military service, Councilman Litman taught public school in Los Angeles for several years before teaching in Simi Valley, Ca. for 15 years. In addition to teaching public school, Councilman Litman was an adjunct professor at Pepperdine University, teaching in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology, where he also completed his Doctoral work in Institutional Management. Since relocating to Mesquite, Councilman Litman has become very active in veterans affairs, directing the annual Veterans Day Parade, Memorial Day Services, bringing the Vietnam Wall That Heals to Mesquite in 2010, helped found the Mesquite Veterans Center, serves on both the boards of the center and the local chapter of Vietnam Veterans, has assisted the Exchange Club on veteran issues, President of Dollars for Scholars, assists the Mesquite-Toes and teaches Psychology at the College of Southern Nevada.

Member—Cathy McAdoo is the founding executive director of Partners Allied for Community Excellence (PACE) Coalition, a community-based coalition working in Elko, Eureka, and White Pine Counties to implement strategies and effect policy change to enhance healthy communities within the counties and the state. This work includes serving, honoring and recognizing veterans and their families for the multiple sacrifices they pay for the freedoms we enjoy as Americans. Cathy has a Bachelor’s degree in Applied Management and has worked in the field of prevention for twelve years. During this time, she has not only mobilized community partners throughout northeastern Nevada, but has been actively involved in and currently serves as the chairwoman for the Nevada Statewide Coalition Partnership (NSCP). She serves on the Nevada Operation Military Kids board and is the liaison representing the NSCP on the Governor’s Veterans Suicide Prevention Council.

Member—Georgene Rea is the Director of Psychological Health for the Nevada National Guard. In this position she serves as a behavioral health consultant, subject matter expert, and advocate for psychological health for service members and their families by promoting mental fitness and personal wellness. Georgene received her undergraduate degree from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, her Master of Arts in Social Work from the University of Georgia, and has an Advanced Graduate Certificate in Forensic Social Work. She has completed the Army National Guard Resilience Trainer Assistant course, a Traumatic Event Management Facilitator course, and is an Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) trainer. Georgene is the proud grand-daughter of a WWII veteran.

Member—Luana J. Ritch, PhD, currently serves as a Quality Assurance Specialist in the Mental Health Services program for the Division of Public and Behavioral Health. She has served with the Division (formerly the Nevada State Health Division) in various positions for 23 years. She has served on numerous statewide committees and has facilitated several strategic planning processes resulting in state plans and initiatives including the Governor’ Maternal and Child Health Advisory Board’s Strategic Plan, the Nevada State Health Plan, the Health Division’s “Futures Initiatives.” In 2012, she published the research brief Suicide Mortality in Nevada’s Military Veterans, 2008-2011 and an update to this report in 2014. Dr. Ritch served in the U.S. Army on Active Duty, Nevada Army National Guard, and U.S. Army Reserve from 1976 to 2005, and the Retired Reserve of the Army of the United States from 2005 to the present. Dr. Ritch holds a Bachelor’s of Science with Distinction in Health Education, a Master’s in Public Administration, and a Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Nevada with a major in Public Policy.

Member—Lucy Sei, LCSW, is the Wing Director of Psychological Health at Nevada Air National Guard in Reno with a focus on resiliency and mission readiness. The WDPH provides direct, face-to-face onsite assessment/referral, consultation and clinical case management. She facilitates health and wellness trainings at National Guard Bureau sites.
Member—David A. Sousa is currently serving in the Nevada Army National Guard as a Battalion Career Counselor for the 422nd Expeditionary Signal Battalion. In his free time, he serves in several Veterans Organizations. Mr. Souza is the Senior Vice Commander for the Department of Nevada Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for 2013-2014. Mr. Souza became a safeTALK trainer in 2013, and has made it a goal to have one safeTALK trained member in each VFW post in Nevada. In the National Guard and VFW, there were recently several members lost to suicide and he feels that with this training we could assist them in getting the help they may need.

Member—Troy Stormoen currently serves as the Veteran Outreach Coordinator for the Department of Veteran Affairs, Reno Vet Center. In this position, he provides support and information for returning combat veterans and their families as they transition back into civilian life. Troy is familiar with the issues that confront veterans upon their return home because he has experienced firsthand the difficulties faced during readjustment. He deployed to both Afghanistan and Iraq as an Army infantryman with the 101st Airborne (Air Assault) in 2002 and 2003-04, respectively. Due to this experience he is committed to supporting veterans on their journey home.

Member—Chaplain Hal Woomer is the full-time State Chaplain of the Nevada National Guard. He is responsible for the care of 4,200 Nevada National Guard Service Members and their Families. He supervises and supports a state wide team of 18 religious support team members and is the advisor to the Adjutant General of the Nevada National Guard and the Commander of the Nevada Army National Guard. In 2009 and 2010, Chaplain Woomer deployed as a Squadron Chaplain providing religious support for the 1-221st Armored Reconnaissance Squadron in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, which provided security to 11 Provincial Reconstruction Teams in as many provinces throughout Afghanistan and conducted counter insurgency operations in Laghman Province. He received his Masters of Divinity from the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California, and is a graduate of the Chaplain Officer Basic and Advance Courses.
Introduction and Executive Summary: The following report is the result of several months of meetings and deliberations of the Governor’s Military Council (Council). It contains a general overview of the defense situation in Nevada, accounts of the Council’s various meetings, and finally, policy recommendations for the Governor and the Legislature to consider ahead of the next Legislative Session. The data in this report as well as the recommendations are focused on improving Nevada’s negotiation position in the event of a future Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process in the U.S. Congress.

The Governor’s Military Council was created through an Executive Order signed by Governor Sandoval in September of 2013. Members of the Council represent the Nevada National Guard, the Nevada Department of Veterans Services, the Governor’s Office of Economic Development, Nevada counties hosting military bases, the Nevada State Clearinghouse, and others. Advisory members from Nevada’s major military bases—Hawthorne Army Depot, Fallon Naval Air Station, and Nellis Air Force Base, and Creech Air Force Base—also assisted as subject matter experts in the development of this report, though they did not have a voting role.

The Council’s mission, as outlined in Executive Order 2013-14, is to “identify opportunities and prioritize recommendations with respect to how best to retain and continue to build Nevada’s current military force capabilities and infrastructure.” These recommendations are due to the Governor by May 1, 2014, in order to best inform the Governor’s legislative agenda for the 78th Legislative Session in 2015. This report is intended to fulfill that reporting requirement.

The Council met numerous times since its creation to accomplish its mission. The meetings, often held in person and by teleconference in order to accommodate members from all over the state, consisted of high-level briefings of Nevada’s military assets, discussions of the appropriate courses of action, and the development of the recommendations found within this report. The Council voted to approve this report for submission to Governor Sandoval at its final meeting on April 24, 2014.

In order to maintain its focus on the requirements and constraints outlined in the founding Executive Order, the Council developed several “guiding principles.” These principles, based on Governor Sandoval’s statewide vision, mission, and objectives, state that the Council’s recommendations will be based on “issues related to economic development” in order to maintain a coherent focus; that the Council’s recommendations will be focused on retaining Nevada’s current defense infrastructure while developing opportunities for future growth as the national military mission evolves; and that, given its short time frame, the Council’s recommendations will be focused on further fortifying existing deliberative and coordinating bodies and developing future bodies and relationships to continue the efforts started by the Governor’s Military Council, and further, empowering those groups to do so through an organized, data-driven approach.

Accordingly, the Council’s recommendations, which were based on the input of the experts who briefed the group, the personal experiences of the members, and the findings developed during the Council meetings, focus on three major areas. The first major area is the creation and funding of an ongoing standing committee to carry the initial work of the Governor’s Military Council forward upon its conclusion. This entails the formation of a formal, ongoing body that focuses on issues related to BRAC, and one that can also serve as a coordinating body between Nevada’s military entities. This
recommendation also calls for the codification and funding of other bodies that have existed by Executive Order for years.

The second major area is the appropriation of funding to conduct a study or studies to update economic impacts surrounding each of Nevada’s Active, Guard, and Reserve component activities. The most recent studies conducted are from 2011, and they are not focused on protecting and developing Nevada’s defense infrastructure as much as they are simply describing the state of the defense landscape in the state. In order for Nevada to be in the best position possible, the standing committee created in the previous recommendation must have the most up-to-date and expansive data available.

The third major area is a general category intended to capture specific recommendations made by the Council. The recommendations in this section, in keeping with the Council’s guiding principles, are focused on issues related to economic development. Specifically, they suggest opportunities for political subdivisions to provide support for their existing military bases, and for the state to provide defense contractors incentives to increase their business operations within the state.

The Council urges that these recommendations be considered together, and not as stand-alone items. Although they will invariably change as they go from recommendations to formal policy through Executive Order or the legislative process, the Council believes that all parts are necessary for addressing the significant challenges facing Nevada’s military infrastructure, and indeed, the nation’s military infrastructure. A standing committee, for instance, cannot be as effective if it does not have the requisite data, and Nevada’s military communities need to be further empowered to engage in supporting their bases with all available means as far ahead of the next BRAC cycle as possible.

The Council would like to reiterate, as it does several times throughout this report, that this is only an initial report. Though it is intended to fulfill the requirements of the founding Executive Order, much more work must be done in the future to build upon the efforts, developments, and successes created by this Council. Because Defense is the fourth largest industry in the state, the Council believes that the call for investments in this area is justified and will yield a significant return for the State.

Guiding principles: The Governor’s Military Council embraces the Governor’s statewide mission to “create a new promise of opportunity” as it applies to Nevada’s defense infrastructure and military communities. This mission is supported by the strategic priorities “sustainable and growing economy,” “educated and healthy citizenry,” “safe and livable communities,” and “efficient and responsive state government.”

Accordingly, the guiding principles of the Governor’s Military Council are:

- In order to best navigate the complex Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process, the Council will focus primarily on issues, initiatives, and recommendations related to economic development throughout Nevada.
- Per the establishing Executive Order, the Council is committed to its focus is to retain and continue to build Nevada’s current military capabilities and infrastructure.
- Due to its short deliverable timeframe, the Council will focus on establishing the foundation for this effort, allowing for 2-, 4-, and 8-year strategies to be developed and executed by future entities and strategic planning iterations.
- The Council believes that data is central to future efforts related to the Base Realignment and Closure process, and that early efforts should focus on identifying important data with respect to economic impact of military infrastructure, areas at risk, potential tradespaces, and regional complexities.
Background: As American involvement in the wars of Iraq and Afghanistan draw to a close, an unprecedented number of service members, veterans, and their families are returning home and reintegrating into communities across the nation. Additionally, the Department of Defense’s posture will begin to change to address new challenges and threats. Both of these realities create significant challenges and opportunities to the State of Nevada as well as the service members who wish to transition from the military into communities throughout the state.

The Department of Defense represents the fourth largest industry within the State of Nevada, and as such, it remains a key strategic focus area for Nevada’s economy going forward. With the possibility of the U.S. Congress conducting another BRAC commission as early as 2017, Nevada must work to ensure that this key industry receives appropriate attention. This will not only ensure that Nevada’s economy remains strong in order to provide the transitioning service members “a new promise of opportunity” no matter the field they choose, but also that Nevada continues to be able to provide these service members and veterans opportunities in fields that match their military expertise and training.

In order to best further address the challenges and opportunities each of these new dynamics will bring to the State of Nevada, Governor Brian Sandoval has proclaimed 2014 to be the “Year of the Veteran,” focusing the State’s service providers and leaders on implementing policies that will enhance the military and veteran experience in Nevada communities. Governor Sandoval has made it his stated goal to make Nevada the most military- and veteran-friendly state in the nation. This means improving collaboration between state agencies, and between state, local, and federal entities. It also means reaching out to Nevada’s veteran and service member communities to identify the challenges and potential solutions. It will also serve as a key part of Nevada’s narrative when making the case for protecting its bases and defense infrastructure in future rounds of BRAC.

Much of this effort has taken shape under the Green Zone Initiative (GZI), which seeks to make the State of Nevada a “Green Zone” for those service members and veterans returning home as well as for those service members already stationed here. The GZI has established a statewide architecture aimed at marshalling all of the existing programs and resources throughout the state while also increasing collaboration between state, local, and federal entities. A crucial part of the GZI is also the development of policy recommendations aimed at improving Nevada’s service delivery to service members, veterans, and their families, which has largely been developed through the creation of several key advisory councils.

One such council is the Governor’s Military Council, which was created by Executive Order 2013-14 on September 18, 2013. According to the Executive Order, the mission of the Council is to “identify opportunities and prioritize recommendations with respect to how best to retain and continue to build Nevada’s current military force capabilities and infrastructure.” The report and recommendations are due to the Governor in order to best inform the Governor’s legislative agenda for Nevada’s military communities ahead of the 78th Legislative Session in 2015.

The Council is co-chaired by the Director of the Nevada Department of Veterans Services and the Adjutant General of the Nevada National Guard. Its membership consists of a number of representatives from numerous agencies throughout Nevada, including representatives from the Governor’s Office, the National Guard, retired military leaders, leaders from Nevada’s military communities, State Lands, the Southwest Defense Alliance, and others. The order requires that the Governor appoint members, the Council meet regularly, and that it deliver a report to the Governor before May 1, 2014. Biographies for each of the Governor’s appointees to the Council can be found in Appendix A of this report.

In order to meet its mandate, the Council met four times after the membership appointments were made to gather information and to develop and discuss recommendations. All four of the meetings
were held at the Adjutant General’s conference room at the Joint Forces Headquarters in Carson City, with teleconferencing available to those unable to attend in person. In accordance with Nevada Open Meeting Law, agendas, minutes, and other meeting materials are available through the Nevada Department of Veterans Services’ Website.

The Council’s first meeting was held on January 22, 2014, at 3:00 PM. The meeting began with an overview of the Council’s mission, purpose, and goals, and moved into a discussion on the potential of the establishment of a federal BRAC commission and hearings. In light of the potential of these BRAC hearings, the Council agreed to focus its energies on gathering information in order to find ways to attract more military activity and consider community impact, both locally and statewide.

The Council’s second meeting was held on March 7, 2014, at 2:00 PM. The meeting began with an overview of federal and state military assets in Nevada, and then moved to reports on defense assets by members representing the Southwest Defense Alliance and the Governor’s Office of Economic Development. Following a brief overview of the Governor’s Military Community Survey, which was released on Veterans Day, 2013, the Governor’s representative on the Council led a discussion on the final report format and organization, to include potential recommendations that had been developed to date.

The Council’s third meeting was held on March 27, 2014, at 2:00 PM. Following introductory actions and remarks, the Council spent the majority of the meeting going through the policy recommendations that had been compiled prior to the meeting. Council members agreed on a final set of basic recommendations in very general terms by removing duplication, unnecessary recommendations, and recommendations that fell outside of the Council’s specific scope.

The Council’s fourth meeting was held on April 24, 2014, at 2:00 PM. The Council spent the majority of the meeting reviewing the contents of this report and developing the final set of policy recommendations. At the close of this meeting, the Council voted to approve this report and its recommendations for submittal to Governor Sandoval by May 1, 2014, as required by Executive Order 2013-14.

Findings—Defense Situation in Nevada: In recent years, the federal government has made it clear that it intends to reduce the Department of Defense’s (DoD) budget. Some of these cuts have already begun, coming in the form of “sequestration” cuts, with future cuts potentially coming through the BRAC process. Recently, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel shed even more light on how these cuts may take place, announcing that “recommendations beyond fiscal year 2015 provide a realistic alternative to sequestration-level cuts, sustaining adequate readiness and modernization most relevant to strategic priorities over the long term, but this can only be achieved by the strategic balance of reforms and reductions.”

The “strategic balance of reforms and reductions” will likely include countless considerations, but many believe that achieving such a balance will require base realignments and closures, changes to the current and future national ship and aircraft inventory, weapons program cancellations, and restructuring of troop and retiree pay and benefits. This momentous shift in Defense strategy and resourcing will undoubtedly have an economic impact on the State of Nevada, though it need not necessarily be a negative one. The following report outlines the current economic environment for Nevada’s Defense communities and infrastructure, and in doing so, outlines the potential economic impacts that these cuts will have to each specific Defense installation in Nevada.

According to recent studies, DoD-related economic development is the fourth largest industry in the State of Nevada, representing billions of dollars to the Nevada economy. This impact spans civilian and military workforces, and exists in communities throughout the state. A few representative examples are below:
• The DoD budget in Nevada accounted for 53,000 jobs, $28 billion in increased economic output, $9 billion in increased personal earnings, $307 million in increased state taxes;
• Defense industries provided 6.2% of all non-farm state employment in 2009;
• Civilian DoD employee furloughs due to sequestration resulted in a reduction of $300 million in FY 2013; and,
• Sierra Nevada Corporation, a Sparks, Nevada-based defense contractor, received largest dollar volume of prime contract awards in Nevada at $134,311,000.

Generally, the DoD landscape in Nevada consists of Creech Air Force Base, Hawthorne Army Depot, Naval Air Station Fallon, Nellis Air Force Base, and the Nevada National Guard (Air and Army Components). While there are various other assets in Nevada, these organizations and facilities represent the greatest economic impact on the state in terms of workforce, investment, and potential opportunity. A brief description of each major military asset in Nevada is provided below.

**Creech Air Force Base:** The Creech Air Force Base mission is primarily training, maintaining, and operating unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) for the U.S. Air Force. Creech is located in Indian Springs, Nevada. It is home to several Air Force and Nevada National Guard units.

According to a report by the Southwest Defense Alliance, Creech is home to nearly 2,090 personnel, many of whom also have families living in the area. This means that Creech represents not only significant military investment in terms of infrastructure, but also in terms of civilian and military jobs. The economic impact of these service members and families cannot only be felt in the Indian Springs area, but also in Las Vegas, which is approximately 45 miles southeast of the base.

According to a report developed for the Governor’s Office of Economic Development in 2011, there was at one time a concern of a potential downward trend in UAV use and development as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan come to a close. However, in October of 2013, the Creech commander announced that their MQ-1 Predator and MQ-9 Reaper remotely piloted aircraft had flown an accumulated two million flight hours. According to their press release, it had taken 16 years for the Creech community to accumulate one million hours of flight time and just a few years to accumulate two million, demonstrating the remarkable evolution and future potential of UAV systems.

There are additional reasons to believe that this concern may be outdated. On December 31, 2013, Governor Sandoval announced that the Governor’s Office of Economic Development’s hard work in preceding years to secure the Federal Aviation Administration’s drone testing site designation had paid off, with testing at two Nevada airports to begin shortly thereafter. This new industry will not only support in highlighting Nevada’s enormous UAV/UAS support capabilities, but will also provide service members separating from locations like Creech excellent civilian employment opportunities without having to move out of Nevada.

**Hawthorne Army Depot:** The Hawthorne Army Depot (HWAD) is a U.S. Army ammunition storage facility located in Hawthorne, Nevada. HWAD has three ammunition production and storage areas along with various other personnel and logistical facilities. Facility capabilities include demilitarization or renovation of ammunition, desert military training, ammunition quality assurance, range scrap processing, and others. HWAD also provides for the storage of the entire DOD owned strategic stock of elemental mercury.

HWAD is the largest employer in Mineral County, averaging 600 jobs annually, or 45% of Mineral County employment and 54% of its payroll. The current operating contract for operation, maintenance, and restoration of HWAD is valued at $33 million per year with an additional flexible workload which averages an additional $30 million per year. In addition, the depot provides an additional $12 million per year in economic activity through purchase of sub-contracted services and supplies. HWAD is home to
only one active duty military member and the other employees at Hawthorne are military contractors and DoD civilians.

HWAD covers 147,236 acres of Nevada. It has over 400 support buildings, and nearly 2,100 magazines that provide an explosive storage capacity of 7,685,000 square feet.

In 2005, HWAD was dangerously close to being closed in the 2005 BRAC cycle, but was spared due to the impact base closure would have on Mineral County. According to the 2011 GOED report, an estimated 879 of the 1,800 highest-paying jobs in the city of Hawthorne would have been lost. Additionally, the closure of Hawthorne Army Depot may have also led to the closure of a hospital in western central Nevada, as well as a school.

Based on the 2005 BRAC, estimated closure costs would exceed $840 million and reach as high as $1.2 billion. This estimate includes $500 million to construct required storage capacity at other depots, $380 million for environmental restoration of industrial areas and $325 million for environmental clean-up of active ranges. An additional $157-$340 million for construction of comparable demilitarization capability at other depots and $390 million to demilitarize currently on-hand stocks could also be required, raising closure costs to $2 billion.

**Naval Air Station Fallon:** With a mission of training pilots and support staff in air-to-air and air-to-ground combat, Naval Air Station Fallon remains the U.S. Navy’s premier tactical air warfare training center in the nation. Located in Fallon, Nevada, NAS Fallon is home to numerous Naval training units, contractors, and a robust military family community. According to their official Website, NAS Fallon “is the only facility in existence where an entire carrier air wing can conduct comprehensive training while integrating every element of the wing into realistic battle scenarios.”

In addition to being a premier training center nationally, NAS Fallon is also the economic heart of Churchill County, providing between 40% and 50% of the County’s economic base. DoD and contractors associated with NAS Fallon are among the largest employers in the county, amounting to nearly 4,000 local jobs. According to a report provided to the Council by the NAS-Fallon command, the total economic impact of NAS Fallon to the regional economy in 2008 was $573 million, approximately $64 million of which is in payroll expenditures. Additionally, NAS Fallon provided approximately $17 million in state and local tax revenues.

**Nellis Air Force Base:** Nellis Air Force Base, known as the “Home of the Fighter Pilot,” is home to more squadrons than any other U.S. Air Force Base in the world. Located in Las Vegas, Nevada, Nellis is often referred to as the flagship base of the U.S. Air Force. It is home to combat units, the “Red Flag” training exercise, the U.S. Air Force Weapons School, and other military units, capabilities, and resources.

Nellis’ footprint expands well beyond the Las Vegas area into most of southern Nevada. It manages Creech Air Force Base, various nearby ranges, and is associated with the support of the nearby Nevada Test and Training Range (Department of Energy). In addition to the numerous training, support, and operational units housed there, Nellis is also the home to a large military family community.

Nellis AFB has a substantial economic impact on the State of Nevada. It is home to approximately 12,000 military and civilian employees. The base contributes more than $5 billion to the Nevada economy annually. This amount includes approximately $850 million in annual payroll expenditures, as well as the purchase of construction materials and supplies, fuel, food, parts and electrical supplies from local vendors.

**Nevada National Guard:** The National Defense Act of 1947 established the Army National Guard, Air National Guard, and Reserve components of the U.S. Army and Air Force. Under Title 32 status, National Guard may be ordered into action by the Governor in response to disasters, while under Title 10 status, they can be mobilized by the President to activate in the national defense. The Air and Army
Components of the Nevada National Guard have facilities located throughout the state, and due to the nature of their service model, National Guard members and their families are members of nearly every community within Nevada.

The state portion of the Nevada National Guard’s missions, facilities, and training is overseen by the Nevada Office of the Military. This means that State of Nevada employees provide administrative support (personnel management, accounting, security, and maintenance and custodial services), as well as other support to the Nevada National Guard for all facilities assigned to the Office of the Military. The Nevada National Guard also hosts a number of conferences and symposia throughout the year bringing additional revenue into the state. In FY2012, for example, the Guard generated an estimated $2,384,500 for local venues and establishments.

Each component of the Nevada National Guard accounts for considerable impact to the Nevada economy. The Nevada Air National Guard component employs 371 full-time members, including federal technicians and Active Guard and Reserve airmen, resulting in over $29 million in payroll expenditures for FY2012. The total Air National Guard Expenses for the same time period were nearly $60 million. The Army National Guard component employs 546 full-time members and is one of the largest government employees in the State of Nevada, resulting in over $76 million in payroll expenditures for FY2012. Total Nevada Army National Guard expenses for the same time period were over $123 million.

Prioritized Recommendations: During the various telephone and in-person meetings of the Council, the Council conducted several brainstorming sessions to develop recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature ahead of the next legislative session. The recommendations, below, were based on the input of the experts who briefed the group, various existing reports, the personal experiences of the members, and the findings developed during the Council meetings.

A. Creation of a New Standing Committee and Augmenting Existing Councils

Members of the Governor’s Military Council found that the increased collaboration, shared expertise, and statewide focus developed during the Executive Order phase were extremely valuable and present a potential value in the future as well. The Council is sensitive to the reality that creating new councils and advisory committees can often duplicate efforts of existing public bodies, and that councils or committees without a mission, focus, and tangible deliverables can often result in fruitless meetings. Through the recommendations below under this section, the Council attempts to address the former concern, while the recommendations in Section B aim to address the latter concern.

Recommendation 1. Create and fund a standing committee to further prepare for a potential BRAC in the future.

The State of Nevada should pass legislation creating a standing committee to continue the efforts of the Governor’s Military Council after it ceases in 2014. The duties of the standing committee should be to oversee the report writing process discussed in the recommendation below, to provide leadership in preparation leading up to and during BRAC cycles in 2017 and later, and preparing Nevada’s argument, narrative, and outreach capability during the BRAC cycles.

Because it is recommended that this standing committee be created in statute, it should also have additional duties for when it is not addressing issues related to BRAC. Much like the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs, the standing committee should also be tasked with identifying priorities, sharing information, increasing collaboration, and forming a sustained network for Nevada’s military communities. This will increase support from state service providers and also provide an outlet for and policy development in future legislative sessions.
The standing committee should be modeled after the Governor’s Military Council and the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs. Like the Governor’s Military Council, its members should include representatives from the Joint Military Advisory Committee, the State Land Use Planning Advisory Committee, the Nevada National Guard, the Nevada Department of Veterans Services, the Southwest Defense Alliance, companies in Nevada’s defense industry, and retired military leaders. Like the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs, the standing committee should be required to provide an annual report to the Governor and the Legislature.

**Recommendation 2. Fund a part-time executive director for the standing committee.**

In conjunction with the legislation establishing a standing committee mentioned in Recommendation 1, above, the legislature should consider an appropriation for an executive director to provide staff support. As pointed out throughout this report, Nevada’s defense infrastructure is Nevada’s fourth-largest industry, and it should be considered a strategic necessity to invest in protecting this statewide asset in a serious way. The executive director position would be part-time, and it would be responsible for staffing meetings, carrying out the wishes of the standing committee and its chair, and providing research and other support between the meetings.

**Recommendation 3. Create funding (travel and per diem) for Nevada’s appointees to the Southwest Defense Alliance.**

The Southwest Defense Alliance (SDA) is a non-profit formed in 1998 to preserve and enhance critical defense missions and assets in the American southwest. They communicate with local, state, and federal elected officials to provide them with key information on the military assets in their region. The SDA’s focus area includes Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah.

Nevada is currently represented by three members on the SDA. These retired military leaders provide the SDA with Nevada’s perspective and serve as a conduit for the informational benefits of the SDA to leaders and policymakers within Nevada. The SDA conducted one of the most recent and thorough analyses of Nevada’s defense infrastructure, much of which is referenced throughout this report.

Nevada’s SDA members currently pay for all travel associated with activities of the Southwest Defense Alliance. While they have been able to do this for several years now, such personal expense does amount to a barrier, and could possible decrease future involvement from retired military leaders in the state. The value to Nevada provided by the SDA is significant, and the cost to the state would be minimal to ensure that this resource remains available into the future.

**Recommendation 4. Create the Joint Military Advisory Committee in statute.**

The Joint Military Affairs Committee (JMAC) is a standing committee made up of state, local, and federal representatives. They meet twice a year to de-conflict land use and other issues related to military bases and military communities within the state. The JMAC is staffed by the Nevada State Clearinghouse.

The purposes of the Nevada Joint Military Affairs Committee are to:

- Maintain effective communication and working relationships between the State of Nevada, Department of Defense branches, Department of Energy, and the federal land management agencies that manage installations and lands in Nevada.
• Discuss plans of mutual interest and, when appropriate, propose actions to address significant issues.

The JMAC arose out of the “Special Nevada Report” in 1991 and has existed ever since. While the Executive Order has provided the necessary structure to maintain the JMAC so far, this does not guarantee its existence into the future. The Governor’s Military Council recognizes the value of such a body and recommends that it be codified in its present form in statute.

B. Conduct an Extensive Study of Nevada’s Defense Infrastructure

As stated in the Council’s guiding principles, “the Council believes that data is central to future efforts related to [BRAC], and that early efforts should focus on identifying important data with respect to economic impact of military infrastructure, areas at risk, potential tradespaces, and regional complexities.” Further, if the standing committee recommended in the section above is created, it will need to have outside assistance in developing an argument based on Nevada’s current and potential inventory. While they should be ultimately responsible for developing the report, competing duties and constraints will likely not allow them to actually conduct the research and synthesis necessary for such a crucial part of Nevada’s economy.

Recommendation 1. Appropriate funding to conduct a study to update economic impacts surrounding each of Nevada’s Active, Guard, and Reserve component activities.

The State of Nevada should appropriate funding for a private research firm to conduct a detailed study of Nevada’s defense infrastructure ahead of the next BRAC cycle. In a general sense, this study should details the challenges and opportunities facing the state, the possible arguments that Nevada should use to preserve and grow its defense infrastructure footprint, and identify key messengers and strategies for those arguments. More specifically, the standing committee recommended above should determine the make-up of this study, and they should consider the following questions to focus their work:

1. What is the real and updated economic impact of Nevada’s defense infrastructure?
2. What are Nevada’s priority military bases in terms of economic impact?
3. What is the economic impact of Sierra Army Depot in Herlong, CA on Washoe County?
4. What are the economic opportunities presented by potentially relocating assets from other states or future assets in Nevada (for example, Herlong, UAVs, etc.)?
5. What narratives should be used to preserve and grow Nevada’s defense infrastructure footprint?
6. Why are Nevada’s military assets crucial to the national defense?
7. How do the listed BRAC requirements present challenges to Nevada’s military assets?
8. How do Nevada’s military assets support the strategic vision provided by the Quarterly Defense Review?
9. How can the Nevada Commission on Tourism and the Governor’s Office of Economic Development work together to develop talking points for each major audience when a BRAC cycle is announced?
10. What should Nevada’s high level communications strategy be?
11. Who are the high-level messengers that should be engaged to carry this message back to Washington D.C. when a BRAC cycle begins?
C. Economic Development Recommendations

While the standing committees and the report above provide key tools for continuing the mission of the Governor’s Military Council after it ceases to exist in 2104, military communities throughout the state need to be further empowered to support the military bases they host. This approach will help Nevada’s military communities support and further develop their bases through real investment and improvement opportunities at the local level. With a BRAC cycle beginning in 2017, they should be allowed to do so as quickly as possible.


Based on legislation in Alaska and other states, military communities throughout the state should be allowed to apply for designation as a Military Facility Zone. Through application with the Governor’s Office of Economic Development, these districts would have access to New Market Funds, Battle Born Venture Fund program, and so on. The opportunities would allow them to continue to build local infrastructure in support of the military members and their families and further show the local investment being made to support the military investment in their community and directly enhance the base’s ability to fulfill its mission in our state.

Recommendation 2. Create secondary contract Incentive.

Due to the aforementioned DoD facilities and assets sited in Nevada, in addition to the U.S. DOE National Nuclear Security Site, many large and highly-regarded government contract corporations have a presence in Nevada. Many of the companies do business in Nevada to service the federal client, most commonly, but not exclusively, as government-owned, contractor-operated (GOCO) ammunition entities. Interestingly, some of these companies are sited in Nevada solely to support a federal contract and do not have a presence independent of their GOCO function. Unfortunately, when a new GOCO contract is awarded, the new corporation often assumes managerial responsibilities at the federal facility with no net gain in Nevada jobs as a result of the new contract. That is, the existing contracted employees simply continue their employment under the new GOCO contractor.

The State should encourage these companies to develop and site independent programs in Nevada that would exist and operate independent of the GOCO contract. In order to do so, the State of Nevada should investigate the feasibility of a tax abatement structure whereby companies that expand into the State to service a federal contract should be provided a financial incentive to also expand or relocate other programs that are not related to their original GOCO function, thereby created new opportunities for employment under other federal contracts within the state.

Conclusion: This report fulfills the requirements outlined in Executive Order 2013-14 signed by Governor Brian Sandoval on September 18, 2013. It outlines the activities of the Governor’s Military Council, it provides detailed findings, and it identifies and prioritizes the needs for protecting and developing Nevada’s defense infrastructure. It also makes recommendations for further improvement within the scope outlined for the Council within the Executive Order, either through the creation of future entities to carry this work forward or by providing for the tools to do so.

As with many reports of this nature, the Council believes that the prioritized recommendations are the most important aspect of this report. The Council was careful to consider the unique challenges and opportunities facing the state as well as the individual military bases and communities within the state, especially as those challenges and opportunities pertained to economic development opportunities. Although the recommendations developed by the Council are individually significant and substantive,
the Council encourages policymakers to consider these recommendations as merely initial steps towards addressing the significant challenges that a future Base Realignment and Closure process would pose to Nevada and its fourth largest industry.

This future work is crucial for many well-established reasons listed within this report. Following more than a decade of war in the Middle East, the nation is anticipating in the process of rebalancing or pivoting to the Pacific Theater; the Department of Defense is actively discussing cuts to troops, systems, and benefits in order to meet its budgetary constraints, and indeed, some action has already been taken towards these areas; and finally, a BRAC is already being discussed by the U.S. Congress for as early as 2017. The Council believes that it provides an appropriate level of focus and detail to allow future standing committees to build upon the momentum already created.
Appendix A: Member Biographies for the Governor’s Military Council

Co-Chair—Colonel (Retired) Katherine Miller was raised in Reno and served 34 years in the U.S. Army. Starting as an enlisted soldier, she culminated her military service with assignments as a military police brigade commander serving in the United States and in Afghanistan and as the Commander of the Department of Defense’s largest correctional organization. After retiring she taught college at the University of Maryland and the University of Nevada, Reno. She served as the Deputy Director for the Nevada Department of Veterans Services prior to accepting appointment from Governor Brian Sandoval as the agency’s Director.

Co-Chair—Brigadier General William R. Burks is the Adjutant General for the State of Nevada. As Adjutant General, he is the senior uniformed Nevada National Guard officer responsible for formulating, developing and coordinating all policies, programs and plans affecting more than 4,000 Nevada Army and Air National Guard personnel. Appointed by Governor Brian Sandoval, General Burks serves as his principal adviser on all National Guard issues.

Member—Nancy Amundsen is the Director of the Clark County Department of Comprehensive Planning. Under her leadership, the Department provides services to customers in the areas of Current Planning, Advanced Planning, Economic Development, the Desert Conservation Program (MSHCP), and impact assessments of the Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Program. She has worked for Clark County since 2006. Mrs. Amundsen has served in a variety of positions in the field of land use planning and zoning since 1995, holding positions in both Maryland and Florida. In addition, she has experience and an understanding of the important relationship between land use planning and its potential impacts to military installations due to her positions in Harford County, MD (Aberdeen Proving Grounds), Panama City, FL (Tyndall Air Force Base, USCG, and NAVSEA), and Clark County, NV (Nellis Air Force Base). She received a Bachelor’s Degree in Political Science/Pre-Law from the University of Central Florida and a Master of Public Administration from the University of Baltimore. Mrs. Amundsen enjoys cycling and exploring the beautiful wilderness of Nevada.

Member—Major General (Retired) Ron Bath began his military career in 1968 as a boiler operator and heating specialist in the enlisted ranks of the Nevada Air National Guard. During the 1997 QDR, he was the Air National Guard assistant to the director for the Air Force effort. Bath was one of 16 senior military officers representing the four services and the single National Guard officer assigned as professional staff to the 1995 congressionally mandated Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces. Having been a traditional guardsman and air technician, Bath is a command pilot with more than 3,500 flying hours in the RF-101 and RF-4 Phantom II. He flew 31 combat missions in Operation Desert Storm, during the Persian Gulf War.

Member—Caleb Cage is the Director of Military and Veterans Policy within the Office of the Governor. Prior to joining the Governor’s Office, Cage was the Executive Director of the Nevada Office of Veterans Services (now the Nevada Department of Veterans Services). There, in addition to leading the State’s veteran home, veteran cemetery, and veteran service officer programs, he helped establish the State’s veteran outreach and collaboration effort, the Green Zone Initiative. Before serving with the Nevada Office of Veterans Services, Cage served as a policy advisor in the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, with a focus on veteran and rural issues. A Reno native, Cage spent five years in the U.S. Army, with two tours in Iraq.
Member—Skip Canfield has been a practicing professional land use and natural resources planner since 1988, upon graduation from Arizona State University with a Bachelor of Science in Design in Urban Planning. Skip’s planning career has included work with City of Phoenix Planning Department, Washoe County Department of Comprehensive Planning, Zoning Administrator for City of Carson City, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency as well as a number of years as a land use and natural resources planning consultant in the private sector. This background led to Skip’s current position with the Nevada Division of State Lands as program manager of the State Land Use Planning Agency and the Nevada State Clearinghouse. In this capacity, Skip represents the State on public lands and natural resource issues, acts as facilitator of projects and processes involving the interaction between local, State and federal agencies, and provides a wide range of land use and natural resources technical assistance to governmental entities. He is an avid outdoorsman with a passion for everything that is Nevada.

Member—Commissioner Cliff Cichowlaz’s career began with a tour in Vietnam where he served as a Sergeant in the 1st Calvary Division and earned many medals, including the Silver Star for valor. Shortly after he returned home, Cliff went to work at the Hawthorne Naval Ammunition Depot (NAD), and a decade later, the Army contracted out the Depot and Cliff continued with the Depot’s new civilian contractor, Day & Zimmermann Basil Corporation (DZB). During his lengthy career at the Depot, Cliff served as Manager of Engineering and became Director of Conventional Ammunition Logistics and Demilitarization. Over the years that followed, he continued to be promoted, until eventually assuming the position of Senior Vice President of SOC, LLC. In 2012, Cliff was elected to serve as a County Commissioner in Mineral County.

Member—Dr. Anne Davis is a native of Michigan. She graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1982 earning a Bachelor of Science degree and a commission as a second lieutenant in the Ordnance Corps. She served in the Army for 29 years in various locations and positions. She commanded the Hawthorne Army Depot from 2000-2002, a government-owned, contractor-operated (GOCO) ammunition depot located in Hawthorne, Nevada. Anne Davis earned an MBA from Harvard Business School in 1991 and her Ph.D. in Business from The City University of New York in 2005. She is currently a member of the faculty for Walden University’s Doctor of Business Administration Program.

Member—Brigadier General Michael Hanifan was appointed as Commander of the Army National Guard in 2013. General Hanifan was commissioned in 1986 upon graduation from the United States Military Academy at West Point with a degree in engineering physics. Following his commission, General Hanifan has been activated four times for more than four combined years since 9/11 to serve in various positions. A Nevada native, General Hanifan joined Bently Nevada as a marketing specialist and later moved to their engineering team. He is currently the engineering manager for sustaining, including hardware, software, custom products and failure analysis.

Member—Eleanor Lockwood has lived in Churchill County since 1997, when she joined the Churchill County Planning Department as Assistant Planner. She holds a Master’s of Science in Agricultural Development from the University of London and a Bachelor’s of Natural Resources in Land Use Planning from the University of New England, Australia. Her work experience prior to moving to Nevada has included development and implementation of a national land use plan in Botswana; working with UNICEF on the development of a water and sanitation program in drought stricken areas of southern Zambia; and current and long range planning activities in the Town of Wake Forest, North Carolina. On September 3, 2012, Eleanor was appointed as Churchill County Manager.
Member—Brigadier General (Retired) Frank Partlow retired from the U.S. Army in 1990 following a career of 34 years. During 2009-2012, he was an independent consultant on Nevada economic development and education reform. He was Executive Director of the Nevada Spending and Government Efficiency (SAGE) Commission, 2008-2009. From 2002-2005, he held a Presidential appointment as Chief of Staff of the U.S. Government Printing Office, a 3500-employee federal agency in Washington, D.C. From 1991-2002, Frank founded and was Executive Director of the Northern Nevada Network, an association of Nevada CEO’s. He was educated at United States Military Academy, Stanford and Harvard. He holds the U.S. Defense Distinguished Service Medal.

Member—Brigadier General David Snyder is the Commander of the Air National Guard in Nevada. As Commander, General Snyder is responsible for formulating, developing and coordinating all policies, programs and plans affecting more than 1,100 Nevada Air National Guard personnel and the C-130, F-15, MQ-1/9, and Distributed Common Ground Station weapons systems. Appointed by the Adjutant General, State of Nevada, General Snyder serves as the Adjutant General’s principle adviser on all Air National Guard issues, is responsible for both the federal and state missions of the Nevada Air National Guard, and serves as the official channel of communication with the National Guard Bureau and Department of the Air Force.

Member—Thomas Wilczek possesses greater than 25 years of experience in defense, energy, environmental, aerospace, and construction law, management, and engineering matters. He supported numerous mission-critical programs for the U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Department of Defense, National Nuclear Security Administration, and regional and local governments throughout the American West. He managed select federal characterization and remediation programs at the Nevada Test Site, Nellis Air Force Base, Tonopah Test Range, and the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. He represented the Nevada State Office of Energy in the advancement of renewable energy bills in the Nevada legislature and was registered lobbyist in previous legislative sessions.

Advisory members include:

- Colonel Barry Cornish, Commander, Nellis Air Force Base
- Lieutenant Colonel Craig Short, Commander, Hawthorne Army Depot
- Captain Leif Steinbaugh, Commander, Naval Air Station Fallon
Interim Report and Recommendations for the Governor
Nevada Women Veterans Advisory Committee
September 4, 2014

Introduction and Executive Summary: On March 13, 2014 Governor Brian Sandoval established the Nevada Women Veterans Advisory Committee (WVAC) by Executive Order 2014-08. The purpose of the Committee is to support and assist the State Women Veterans Coordinator in locating, educating, and advocating for all women veterans in the state. A final report will be presented by the Committee to the Governor by June 1, 2015. At the request of the Director, Military and Veterans Policy, this interim report is submitted by the WVAC in order to inform possible legislation for the upcoming 78th Nevada Legislative Session.

Recommendations in this report result from WVAC deliberations conducted during public meetings on July 23, 2014 and August 15, 2014. In accordance with Nevada Open Meeting Law, meeting dates, agendas and minutes of these meetings are available through the Nevada Department of Veterans Services' website.

The committee used information from surveys, face-to-face conversations with women veterans, presentations from the Nevada Department of Veterans Services and the US Department of Veterans Service, and their personal knowledge/experiences as women veterans to develop these recommendations.

It is the hope of this committee that the recommendations that follow will help veterans and nonveterans alike understand and celebrate the legacy of America’s service women, and help create a culture that recognizes and supports the unique needs of women veterans. There has been significant progress made towards support of women veterans but much remains to be accomplished; the recommendations in this report are intended to continue that momentum.

Guiding principles: As directed by the Executive Order establishing our Council, we have made locating, educating, and advocating for all women veterans in Nevada a central focus of our overall efforts to date. The first round of recommendations and endorsements developed are:

1. Recommend that the Nevada Department of Veterans Services Women Veteran Program Coordinator be established as a full time position. It is currently staffed as a part-time function.

2. Recommend that the Women Veterans Advisory Committee (WVAC) be codified in statute as a sub-committee of the Veterans Services Committee (VSC). We suggest that the WVAC consist of a minimum of seven members, two of which represent women veterans from rural and frontier areas across the state. A member of the WVAC, as selected by the WVAC Chair, would serve on the Nevada Veterans Services Commission.

3. Recommend that Nevada Department of Veterans Services continue efforts to fund and develop a Veterans Information System to identify where veterans are located throughout the state so that veterans (to include women veterans) are informed about benefits and opportunities that they may be eligible for.

4. Recommend that State of Nevada agencies who collect veteran data add the data collection question, "Have you ever served in the United States Military?" to their forms/applications (during the next programmed update) in place of the question "Are you a veteran?" Studies
have shown that many women veterans do not self identify as a veteran and asking if they have served will help ensure that their status as a veteran is identified.

5. Recommend that the Governor encourage US Department of Veterans Affairs and State of Nevada initiatives to provide or expand telehealth programs for Women Veterans in rural areas.

6. Recommend that the Governor communicate to the US Department of Veterans Affairs the need for additional hours the Obstetrician/Gynecologist at the Southern Nevada Veterans Medical Center is available, per the Women Veterans Health Center Strategic Plan, so that women veterans’ needs for specialty care are met.

7. Recommend that Nevada Department of Veterans Services develop a white paper in collaboration with the Women Veterans Advisory Committee that informs legislators and State Agencies of facts regarding Nevada’s Women Veterans, to include demographics, their contributions to National and State security, and unique needs of this population. This information may help reduce misinformation and improve women veteran programming support.

8. Recommend that Nevada Department of Veterans Services develop a women veterans training module to be included in the training for Nevada Veterans Advocates and the Nevada Veterans Service Officers.

9. Recommend that Nevada Department of Veterans Services develop a Strategic Communications Plan that includes how to reach women veterans throughout the state.

10. The Women Veteran Advisory Committee endorses the efforts of the Nevada System of Higher Education and the Student Veterans Advisory Committee in developing Veterans support programs and on-campus Veterans Support Centers in Nevada to support Nevada Veterans.

The Women Veterans Advisory Committee will continue to meet in order to complete the work outlined in Executive Order 2014-08. The final report will be delivered to the Governor by June 1, 2015 and will contain a complete list of recommendations that the WVAC believe will support and improve services for women veterans in Nevada.

Biographies for each of the Governor’s appointees to the Committee can be found in Appendix A of this report.
Appendix A: Women Veterans Advisory Committee Biographies

Chair of Committee—Dr. Anne Davis – Retired Army Colonel/Reno: Dr. Anne Davis is a native of Michigan. She graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1982 earning a Bachelor of Science degree and a commission as a second lieutenant in the Ordnance Corps. She served in the Army for 29 years in various locations and positions. She commanded the Hawthorne Army Depot from 2000-2002, a government-owned, contractor-operated (GOCO) ammunition depot located in Hawthorne, Nevada. Anne Davis earned an MBA from Harvard Business School in 1991 and her Ph.D. in Business from The City University of New York in 2005. She is currently a member of the faculty for Walden University’s Doctor of Business Administration Program.

Vice Chair of Committee—Anthoneal Newman – VA/Army Reserve E-4 Specialist/Las Vegas: Mrs. Anthoneal Newman is an Operation Enduring Freedom Veteran who served in the United States Army Reserves for eight years and was deployed to Bosnia in 2004-2005. While in the military, she worked as an Administrative Assistant, Human Resource Specialist, and Postal Clerk. She obtained a Bachelor’s Degree in Criminal Justice and a Master’s Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from Troy University. Mrs. Newman began her career with the Department of Veteran Affairs as a Veteran Service Representative (VSR) at the Montgomery Regional Office in April of 2009. Mrs. Newman accepted employment in Las Vegas, NV on August of 2014 to become the first VetSuccess on Campus Counselor (VSOC) in Nevada.

Sharlee W. Smith—Retired Army Reserve Lieutenant Colonel/Reno: Charley enlisted in the US Army as a Private First Class on 19 Dec 1981; and retired as a Lieutenant Colonel on 31 May 2006. Her education includes a Bachelor’s Degree, a Master’s Degree, and completion of the US Army Command & General Staff College. Her highest military award is the Legion of Merit. Charley is an avid volunteer for Veterans and serves in the following organizations and volunteer programs – current President and life member of the Sixth Region of the Association of the United States Army (AUSA); Charter Member of the Women In Military Service for America (WIMSA); life member of the Reserve Officers Association (ROA); life member of the National Guard Association (NGAUS); life member of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV); member of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA); only Veteran volunteer for the VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System Women Veterans Health Committee; and appointed in 2010 by the Nevada Governor for the Northern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery Committee (Fernley). Her chosen passion is ballroom dancing and is her current profession, where she teaches and performs in the Northern Nevada area.

Bobi Pike-Oates—Women Veterans of Nevada Association/Retired Air Force Senior Master Sergeant/Las Vegas: Roberta Pike Oates (Bobi) U. S. Air Force, retired aircraft maintenance Senior Master Sergeant, 23 years of service. She was handpicked as one of four individuals to stand up the Air Force first Remote Piloted Aircraft Predator Squadron at Creech AFB. As Production Superintendent for the 11th Reconnaissance Squadron she led the initial Air Force Cadre of Maintenance personnel thought training at the UAV training center at Fort Huachuca, AZ, then on to Taszer, Hungary for the first Air Force Deployment in support of Operation Joint Endeavor. During her Air Force career she served at several overseas and stateside bases in various Aircraft Maintenance positions. She also deployed to Incirlik Air Base, Turkey in support of Operation Provide Comfort. After retiring from the Air Force she was a Branch Manager for Armed Forces Bank at Nellis AFB. Bobi has lived in Nevada for 20 years. She is a member of the Women Veterans of Nevada Ceremonial team, and a board member. A life member of the Air Forces Association; a Charter Member of the Women in Military Service for America; Air Force Sergeants Association; American Legion; Veterans of Foreign Wars; and a life member of the Disabled American Veterans. Bobi holds a BS in Business Management, AA in Aircraft Maintenance, AS in Law
Enforcement, Certificates in Paralegal Studies and Banking. Her awards include Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, 57th Wing, Nellis AFB and Resource Advisor of the Year Air Warfare Center, Nellis AFB.

Lesli Ellis—Retired Marine Corps Master Sergeant/Elko: Lesli Ellis joined the U.S. Marine Corps in February 1987 as a Marine Corps Integrated Maintenance Management Clerk. After completing her first overseas tour at Camp Kinser, Okinawa, Japan she was stationed at Camp Pendleton, California. Here she made a lateral move to become a print journalist. In 1995, she was transferred to Recruiting Station San Francisco for duty in marketing in public affairs. In 1998 she returned to Camp Pendleton to serve as Press Chief, Media Chief and Internal Operations Chief. She was deployed to Egypt in 1999 for Exercise Bright Star 99/00. She then transferred to MCRD Parris Island to serve as the public affairs chief for the 9th Marine Corps District and was later reassigned to Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan as the Station’s public affairs chief. In 2007, she became the public affairs chief for Marine Forces Pacific stationed at Camp Smith, Hawaii. During her tour at MarForPac, she deployed to the Philippines for Exercise Balikatan twice, Thailand for Exercise Cobra Gold twice and Australia for Exercise Talisman Saber. She retired as a Master Sergeant in Oct. 2010 after 23 years of service. After retirement, she accepted a position as the public affairs specialist for the Bureau of Land Management in Elko, Nevada.
Introduction and Executive Summary: The report that follows is the result of combined efforts of various veteran advocates, service providers, and leaders working throughout the state to address the needs of Nevada’s incarcerated veterans. The entire report, completed by the Incarcerated Veterans Reintegration Council (Council), is focused on improving veteran success upon reentry. It contains a general overview of the establishing Executive Order, the meetings held, findings, and specific policy recommendations for the Governor, the Legislature, and service providers to consider.

The Council was created through an Executive Order signed by Governor Sandoval in May of 2014. Following the creation of the Council, members gathered numerous times via videoconference and teleconference to examine the landscape incarcerated veterans face upon reentry into Nevada communities and to develop recommendations based on these findings. This report fulfills the requirements outlined for the Council in the establishing Executive Order.

Through the Council’s meetings, research into the current state of Nevada’s incarcerated veteran population, national promising practices for reducing recidivism, and current services provided was conducted. The resulting findings and recommendations consist of merely a first effort to identify the challenges and opportunities within this landscape, and should not be considered to be a comprehensive discussion of this important subject matter. It is the intention of this Council that the findings, relationships, and progress identified and established through this important work be carried forward to ensure that incarcerated veterans have opportunities to succeed upon reentry.

Specifically, the Council identified several important recommendations for improving outcomes for incarcerated veterans. They include improving internet access for all incarcerated individuals, not only veterans, so that they can improve their ability to find employment; requirement for the Nevada Department of Corrections (DOC) to capture and report data specific to veterans in Nevada; increased usage of telehealth capabilities provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); as well as considering specific practices such as Veteran Reentry Courts and Veteran Program and Dorm Units at DOC facilities. The Council believes that these recommendations and others should be considered for implementation, either through legislation, policy changes, or otherwise in the future.

The Council believes that there are promising opportunities for progress in this area, and that some of that progress could be achieved immediately. Next steps will be determined by various policy makers and implementers, and the Council believes that some members can provide subject matter expertise going forward. The Council also believes that the full spectrum of service providers—community, local, state, and federal—should collaborate to address this important issue.

Background: The Incarcerated Veterans Reintegration Council was created to “make recommendations in a report to the Governor examining how to better assist Nevada’s incarcerated veterans in successfully reintegration, how the Nevada Department of Corrections can maximize resources available through the federal Department of Veterans Affairs, and the availability of other services, resources, or programs which could assist transitioning veterans.” The report was originally due to the Governor on or before August 15, 2014, however, due to scheduling difficulties, this deadline was changed to December 8, 2014. The completion of this report, which fulfills the requirement of the establishing Executive Order, will coincide with the meeting of the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs, which would consider including this report with its annual recommendations to the legislature.
The Council consists of principals or representatives of multiple agencies, not to exceed 12 members. These members include representatives from the Department of Corrections, Veterans Services, the Office of the Governor, the federal VA, the Provost Marshall of the Nevada National Guard, Parole Re-entry services of Nevada Parole and Probation, veteran specialty courts, the Veteran Incarcerated Committee of the Vietnam Veterans of America, non-profit service providers, and other members as determined by the Governor. Biographies for each of the Governor’s appointees to the Council can be found in Appendix A of this report.

The Council met a total of four times to support the development of this report. The meetings started in late October 2014 and ended in early December 2014, and covered topics relevant to the overall work and study conducted. These topics included, but were not limited to:

- Barriers to employment for incarcerated veterans.
- Data gathering and supporting for successful interventions.
- Models for convening all service providers enhance direct support services.
- Access to educational opportunities during incarceration.

Presentations by subject matter experts in each of the areas covered during the meetings resulted in much of the detailed information provided in the “findings” section below, and greatly influenced the Council’s recommendations as well.

**Findings:** The reports to the Council resulted in various findings. Some came from promising practices established by organizations represented by Council member, while others came through the interagency dialog regarding incarcerated veterans. Many of the findings are captured in this report, and all inform the Council’s recommendations below.

One of the key findings came through member Mr. Terry Hubert, who focused on the importance of offender data, particularly for incarcerated veterans. As of an October 2014 report, Nevada DOC has a total of 1,247 incarcerated veterans, including parolees, outcounted, and intake prisoners. It should be noted that this is based on incarcerated veterans who self identify as veterans, which is a challenge as some incarcerated veterans choose not to self-identify for various reasons.

These Veterans come from the following branches of military services:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch of Service</th>
<th>Total Veterans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Army Veterans</td>
<td>590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy Veterans</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine Veterans</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force Veterans</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coast Guard Veterans</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data regarding the NDOC veteran population offense categories tell an interesting story as well. Of course, veterans are represented in all offense categories, but the highest percentages for veterans are sex offenses and violent crimes. According to an October 2014 report, their offense categories by percentage are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offense Category</th>
<th>Total Veterans</th>
<th>Percent Veterans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drug</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUI</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An additional report provided by Nevada DOC showed that veterans of various offense categories were housed in every facility in the state. Due to the fact that the majority of veterans are incarcerated for sex offense and violent crimes, most veterans are currently housed at the Northern Nevada Correctional Center. Of note, the report also indicated that there are currently at least 11 women veterans incarcerated at the Florence McClure Correctional Center, at the Jean Camp, or at Casa Grande.

As can be seen by these numbers, 35% of veterans are incarcerated for sex offenses, the highest percentage of all offense categories. This poses a significant challenge because it is difficult to find housing for sex offenders in Nevada communities. Though there are few federal, state, local, and community programs to address these very challenging social and legal barriers for these veterans.

Currently, Nevada’s Parole and Probation Division does not have the ability to track the number of veterans it manages. Also, although statewide county and municipal jails are not currently participating in a data-gathering effort, many of the jails in Clark County are. Currently, municipal and county detention records show 4.4% of the jail population is veteran, however this number does not reflect national averages.

A significant barrier was identified for Nevada’s incarcerated population, including its veterans. State law currently prohibits the use of the Internet in correctional facilities. However, nearly all jobs require online applications, making it very difficult for those seeking employment to find it after leaving incarceration.

Another key finding has to do with a highly successful model for service intervention for incarcerated veterans. The Council understands that no agency, local, state, or federal, provides as many services to veterans, including incarcerated veterans, as the federal Department of Veterans Affairs. While the VA funds numerous services for incarcerated veterans through the Veterans Health Administration, the VA also coordinates other community, local, and state services to assist incarcerated veterans, especially with respect to establishing a transition plan so that veterans can exit correctional facilities on time.

One way that this has been done particularly well is through a Memorandum of Understanding between the Nevada DOC and the VA Medical Center in Las Vegas. This MOU allows VA Health Care for Re-Entry Veterans Specialists to work directly with incarcerated inmates to develop their transition plan through the VA’s robust telehealth capabilities. This allows the VA to convene various service providers to meet with the veteran inmate over video, saving time and resources on travel and gaining entry into a restrictive environment.

The VA in southern Nevada has extended this promising practice by creating informal collaborative committees to assist the incarcerated veteran population during their transition out of prison. This has resulted in many efficiencies, including housing veterans for less time, increased usage of federal and community resources, and other opportunities. This, combined with telehealth capabilities, has been a highly effective model for serving Nevada’s incarcerated veteran population.

Other promising practices that were explored by the Council were concepts referred to as Veteran Reentry Courts and Veteran Dorm Units. The Council Chair was interested in discussing both solutions, but encouraged that they be done in a piloted manner so that they could be measured for effectiveness. Many well-intentioned programs actually increased recidivism, and the goal of efforts like these should always be to measurably decrease recidivism.
Veteran Reentry Courts are a type of collaborative justice courts specifically for offending veterans. They are similar to Veteran Treatment Courts and are available to veterans upon their release from prison, violation of their parole, and for those who have histories of mental illness or substance abuse. Reentry courts vary, and they address many different demographics beyond merely veteran populations, in general they share common focuses:

- A reentry court team, often made up of defense and prosecuting attorneys, parole and probation officers, and case specific staff and case managers join together to determine the best course of action for the incarcerated veteran.

- The veteran receives an assessment for their risk of recidivism/re-offending, as well as what their treatment needs are and the resources that are available to them.

- Following the assessment, the veteran participates in regular reentry court sessions, to assess their success with respect to their treatment plans.

- During these regular reentry court sessions, the veteran can be sanctioned for failure to comply, and they can also be given incentives for successful compliance.

- The course of the reentry court sessions spans from approximately one year to a year-and-a-half, during which time veterans receive continued services, treatment, and case management until they successfully complete their program or are discharged early for achieving goals ahead of schedule.

Veteran Reentry Courts are not widely-used models nationally, however there is an increased focus on them. Other states and federal districts are using them successfully for various demographics other than veterans, and organizations like the Vietnam Veterans of American continue to highlight them as a national promising practice. Like Nevada’s successful veterans court models, Veteran Reentry Courts could conceivably reduce recidivism as well.

Veteran Dorm Units are promising practices that are gaining use and attention around the country as well. Several states have instituted them and early results are showing success. Unlike Veteran Reentry Courts, Veteran Dorm Units are to provide support for the veteran near the end of his or her time in incarceration.

Veteran Dorm Units are essentially specific living quarters for veteran inmates. They often have veterans as correctional officers, observe military protocol such as flag raising ceremonies in the morning, and for many, participation in these units is completely voluntary. Veteran Dorm Units allow correctional facilities to not only bring together inmates with common backgrounds and training, but also to focus the extensive support services provided by the VA and other community partners on this specific population at once.

Recommendations: Based on the findings above as well as the expertise provided by the members of the Council, the following recommendations are proposed. They are not provided here in prioritized order. They are:

Recommendation 1—Internet Usage for Certain Inmates for Employment Purposes: The Council recommends developing legislation and accompanying Nevada DOC policies and procedures allowing incarcerated veterans to utilize the internet to apply for employment online within a limited time period before the individual’s release date.

Recommendation 2—Data Reporting from DOC, P&P, and County and Municipal Jails: Correctional facilities at all levels throughout the state should be required to gather and share aggregate data on incarcerated veterans. This information should be combined and provided to the federal VA in order to identify eligible veterans and coordinate services, such as Nevada Department of Motor Vehicles ID cards, to improve the incarcerated veteran’s opportunity for success upon release.
Recommendation 3—Increase Telehealth Interlocal Agreements for all Nevada VISNs: The successful telehealth model established through interlocal agreement signed by the VA Healthcare System of Southern Nevada and the Nevada Department of Corrections should be expanded to Veteran Integrated Service Networks (VISN) 19 and 21 to ensure that incarcerated veterans throughout the state have access to this opportunity.

Recommendation 4—Ongoing Incarcerated Veteran Task Force: The Council recommends the development of a incarcerated veterans task force made up of service providers throughout the state to meet quarterly and ensure the issues and concerns identified in this report are being worked, address any new matters, and continue in the Council’s efforts. Like the Council, this task force should be chaired by the Department of Corrections, with members from non-profit, VA, veteran organizations, Nevada Department of Veterans Services, and other stakeholders. The task force members should not represent agency leadership, but rather implementers and experts who work on these issues daily.

Recommendation 5—Veteran Dorm Units: Based on the findings above, the Council recommends that the Nevada Department of Corrections consider piloting a Veteran Program and Dorm Unit at an appropriate correctional facility.

Recommendation 6—Veterans Reentry Court: The Council recommends that existing Veterans Treatment Courts, Reentry Courts, and other organizations consider implementing or piloting the Veterans Reentry Court model in Nevada.

Conclusion: This report fulfills the requirements outlined in Executive Order 2014-12, signed by Governor Brian Sandoval on May 12, 2014. It provides detailed findings, identifies needs for Nevada’s Incarcerated veterans, and it makes recommendations for further improvements to the Governor and the Legislature. Next steps will be determined by policy makers and implementers in agencies and organizations throughout local, state, and federal governments.

While the findings were greatly helpful in developing an appropriate picture of the landscape of services, barriers, and opportunities facing Nevada’s incarcerated veteran population, the Council believes that the recommendations are the most important aspect of this report. This is because they provide clear, actionable items for policymakers and service providers to act upon. The Council believes that the recommendations provided decrease the resource requirements for the state and can increase community support and collaboration. All of this together can assist in increasing positive outcomes for Nevada’s incarcerated and reintegrated veteran populations, including reduced recidivism.

The members of the Incarcerated Veterans Reintegration Council understand that this report is merely the beginning. More work will be required to advocate for the changes outlined in this report, to implement approved policy recommendations, and to continue to build a community of support for Nevada’s veteran population. The establishment of this Council and the completion of this report are important first steps, and the members look forward to working together to facilitate change.

Finally, the Council would like to thank Governor Brian Sandoval for his leadership in addressing this important work. Not only were information shared and challenges and opportunities identified, but important collaborative relationships were established through this Council as well. Thanks to Governor Sandoval’s leadership, Nevada has an opportunity to continue the important work already underway and explored through this report.
Appendix A: Member Biographies for the Incarcerated Veterans Reintegration Council

Chair—James “Greg” Cox began his correctional career in November of 1981 as a Correctional Officer for the Illinois Department of Corrections. He received his Bachelor’s Degree in Political Science from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. During his career with the Illinois Department of Corrections, he was assigned to the Logan Correctional Center, the Lincoln Correctional Center, the Pontiac Correctional Center, and the Springfield Work Camp. During his 22 years there, he held the positions of Correctional Officer, Correctional Lieutenant, Correctional Captain, Major, Assistant Warden, and he became a Warden in 1998. He retired from the Illinois system on June 30, 2003. In December 2003 Director Cox joined the Nevada Department of Corrections as the Warden of Southern Desert Correctional Center. He was appointed Director of the agency in 2011.

Vice Chair—Willette Gerald is the Deputy Director of the Nevada Department of Veterans Services. She is a veteran of the U.S. Air Force and served proudly as a noncommissioned officer from 1975-1995. After retiring Willette relocated to Las Vegas, Nevada and served in the private sector as a Human Resources Director and later began her career with the State of Nevada at the Department of Motor Vehicles, serving most recently as Personnel Officer for the Southern Region. Willette holds a Bachelor’s degree in Management with an emphasis in Human Resources from Webster University and an Associate's degree in Personnel Administration from the Community College of the Air Force.

Member—Caleb Cage is the Director of Military and Veterans Policy within the Office of the Governor. Prior to joining the Governor’s Office, Cage was the Executive Director of the Nevada Office of Veterans Services (now the Nevada Department of Veterans Services). There, in addition to leading the State’s veteran home, veteran cemetery, and veteran service officer programs, he helped establish the State’s veteran outreach and collaboration effort, the Green Zone Initiative. Before serving with the Nevada Office of Veterans Services, Cage served as a policy advisor in the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, with a focus on veteran and rural issues. A Reno native, Cage spent five years in the U.S. Army with two tours in Iraq.

Member—Patty DeRosa was hired by Parole and Probation in 1991 as an Administrative Assistant I in the accounting department. In 1992, she transferred to the Northern Command office located in Carson City until 1995, and was promoted to Administrative Assistant II and helped open the Minden office of Parole and Probation. In 2001, she was promoted to Parole and Probation Specialist II in the Fugitive Apprehension Unit, where her job was to locate and have arrested fugitives from Nevada Parole and Probation. In 2003, she was re-assigned to the Prerelease Unit as there was a backlog of inmates who were overdue on parole, where she remained until 2012 when she was promoted to Parole and Probation Specialist III in the Interstate Compact Unit. There she trained all ISC P&P Specialist II’s and supervising a caseload of high profile cases and sex offenders being supervised in other states. In October of 2013 she was placed in the Parole and Probation Re-entry program, where he duties included developing the statewide program, working with other state agencies in regards to inmate’s reintegration back into society, and working with community leaders to find suitable housing, employment, counseling and treatment.

Member—Terry Hubert is an Adjunct Criminal Justice Professor at the University Nevada, Reno and Western Nevada College. He serves as the President of the Nevada State Council of Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) and served seven years as National Chair of VVA’s Veterans Incarcerated Committee (VIC). As VIC Chair Terry has visited incarcerated veterans at Soledad, San Quentin, and Vacaville (California), Angola State Penitentiary (Louisiana), Auburn Correctional Facility (New York), and most
recently, the veterans at the Oregon State Prison. Terry has written extensively on incarcerated veterans in VVA’s bi-monthly magazine, The Veteran, and he has been a panelist at the National GAINS Conference, National Commission on Correctional Health Care, and at the DVA/DOD Evolving Paradigms Conference. Terry is the past President of the Board of Directors of the RidgeHouse and remains a member of the Board of Directors of RidgeHouse, Inc., northern Nevada’s only Prisoner Reentry Program serving men, women and Veterans. Terry was employed with the Nevada Department of Corrections for 25 years, including as a unit counselor, classification analyst, correctional casework manager (timekeeper), and Associate Warden of Programs. Born in Erie, Pennsylvania, Terry served in the United States Marine Corps and deployed to the Republic of South Vietnam in 1969-1970.

Member—Jeff Iverson serves as General Manager of Las Vegas-based Presidential Limousine. In his position, he oversees the firm’s overall operations, including the fleet, drivers, operations, marketing and business development. A native Las Vegan, Iverson graduated from Las Vegas High School in 1992. Dedicated to giving back to his community, Iverson has served on various boards including HOPE for Prisoners, HELP of Southern Nevada, and the Solutions Foundation. Currently, he is focusing his attention on helping recovering drug users through his role as CEO of the Freedom House, a 501c3 not-for-profit agency dedicated to assisting individuals recovering from drug and alcohol addiction secure stable housing, food assistance, and access to recovery support services in a structured environment, which Iverson created and co-founded in 2010. Freedom House is. The Freedom House is one of the largest facilities of its type in Nevada, fully licensed by The Nevada Division of Behavioral Health and approved by Nevada Parole and Probation to provide reintegration services to ex-offenders released from the Nevada Department of Corrections.

Member—Robert Kolvet enlisted into the army in 1995 and was assigned to Bravo Company, 51st Signal Battalion located in Ft. Bragg, North Carolina. After reaching the rank of Specialist, he was honorably discharged and came back to his home state of Nevada to attend college. Kolvet holds an Associate’s of Science degree and a Bachelor’s of Science in Criminal Justice. He is currently in the Nevada National Guard, where he has served in numerous leadership and support capacities. In January 2014, he was directed to take over duties as the Nevada National Guard’s State Provost Marshal where he currently assigned. He has received the Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, and others.

Member—Tracy Lanners began her career with the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) in Las Vegas in 2011 as a Mental Health Intensive Case Manager and in 2012 became the Health Care for Re-Entry Veterans Specialist. Her career includes extensive work within clinical psychosocial treatment and case management at an advanced practice level and development and facilitation of community collaboration and services in the areas of individual, crisis, marital, community re-integration and family interventions for veterans. Ms. Lanners received her B.S. in Criminal Justice and Social Work in 1999 and M.S. in Social Work in 2003 from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. She also holds a post Masters level certificate in Forensic Social Work, which she received in 2008 from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Ms. Lanners is certified in the areas of Moral Recognition Therapy (MRT), Alpha-Stim Therapy, Criminal Justice, and Clinical Social Work Intern Supervision.
**Veterans Legislative Symposium**

*Hosted by the Nevada Department of Veterans Services*

*Saturday, March 8, 2014*

**Background:** The Nevada Department of Veterans Services (NDVS) and the Office of Governor Brian Sandoval hosted the Veterans Legislative Symposium (Symposium) on Saturday, March 8, 2014, from 8:30 AM-12:00 PM. The biannual event serves as an opportunity to bring together various perspectives from the veteran community and to develop legislative recommendations for the upcoming legislative session. Recent previous Symposia have been held in Las Vegas (2010) and in Tonopah (2012), with this year’s held in Reno.  

The initiative, which started in the early 2000s, provides an opportunity for all veterans across Nevada to develop their agenda and prioritize their goals ahead of the upcoming session. While the Symposium is held in the even years between sessions, a Veterans Legislative Summit is held immediately before the Session to update the veteran community on progress. Finally, NDVS partners with the Nevada National Guard to hold Veterans and Military Day at the Legislature during the Legislative Session to bring awareness to the issues that affect the veteran community most.

The aim of this Symposium was to bring together the veteran community and highlight the ideas and issues for the upcoming 78th Legislative Session in 2015. It also provided an opportunity to engage directly with veterans on issues, encourage them to work with legislators, and otherwise become or remain involved in the legislative process. Over the years, these events have been crucial to encouraging members of the veteran community to collaborate and make their voices heard to the State Legislature.

This year’s Symposium was by far the best-attended event in recent history. There were over a hundred veterans present, many representing groups or communities that have not been a part of the legislative process for veterans in the past. Moreover, the perspectives ranged from Korean War veterans up through a considerable number of veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. A number of members of the broader civilian and service provider communities attended as well.

The 2014 symposium began with the opening ceremonies, which included a presentation of the Veteran of the Month award for March 2014 to Mr. Ken Santor of the Marine Corps League and the Military Order of the Purple Heart, followed shortly by a presentation from Assemblyman Randy Kirner of District 26 on how the legislative process in the State of Nevada works. In doing so, Assemblyman Kirner provided invaluable insight as to how the veterans who attended the symposium could contribute and be most effective during the upcoming Session. Finally, Caleb Cage from the Office of the Governor provided a brief overview of the 2013 legislative session in order to inform the participants of some of the previous issues that have been brought to the attention of the Nevada Legislature.

Following the opening ceremonies and presentations, Mr. Cage opened the floor for veterans to address the symposium with their individual or organizational priorities for the 78th Legislative Session. After two hours of brainstorming, each participant was given the opportunity to vote to for the top five legislative items they would like to see addressed. The votes allowed NDVS and the Office of the Governor to develop a prioritized list of policy changes and recommendations from the veteran community.

The resulting list from the 2104 Symposium contains 21 items, and while several items received the same number of votes, all of the items presented by the veteran community are ranked below. Many of the items on the prioritized list are not surprising, as they have been priorities within the

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14 This report was prepared by Mr. Zachary B. Hadsell during a veteran internship with the Office of the Governor. Prior to joining the Governor’s Office as an intern, Mr. Hadsell served for six years as an Arabic linguist in the United States Air Force, separating as a noncommissioned officer. Mr. Hadsell is currently studying engineering at the University of Nevada, Reno.
veteran community for years or were high priorities during the last legislative session. It is equally unsurprising that many on the list below are new ideas or represent suggestions of small changes in previously passed pieces of legislation.

**PRIORITY 1. Northern Nevada Veterans Home**

Following the completion of construction on the Nevada State Veterans Home in Boulder City (NSVH), the Legislature agreed that the next veterans home would be built in northern Nevada. In the eleven years since NSVH opened, the home in northern Nevada has been the top priority for the veteran community, which remained true following the 2014 Symposium. The 77th Legislative Session provided tangible progress toward this goal, building on a substantial history of previous progress.

For instance, in 2006, the Nevada Department of Veterans Services (NDVS) submitted a request to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for a grant to construct a Northern Nevada Veterans Home. This grant would provide 65% of the eligible costs of design and construction of the facility. In 2007, NDVS signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Department of Health and Human Services designating 10 acres on the Northern Nevada Mental Health Campus for the home.

In 2008, Nevada was accepted by the NCB Capital Foundation to use the operational and facility model known as “Greenhouse Concept®.” Based on the underlying principle of aging people’s desire for a homelike environment with choices coupled with a personalized care model, NDVS developed schematic renderings of a proposed facility. The cost for a 96-bed facility using this model would be approximately $39M. During the 2009 legislative session, NDVS submitted a Capital Improvement Project (CIP) request for the state’s funding of the facility, but it narrowly missed making the list of projects submitted to the legislature for funding.

In 2011, NDVS chose not to pursue a CIP request for the $13M state share for the Greenhouse plan because of the State’s dire fiscal situation. Pursuing a bond measure was also not an option. NDVS removed the home in northern Nevada as the agency’s top priority, but continued to look at other measures that could bring it about in the future. These included: building a home based off of the model used in Boulder City versus the Greenhouse model, which would reduce the construction by at least half; entering discussions with State Lands to find alternate locations in the Reno/Sparks area to build the Home; and, looking for alternative funding sources outside the state’s General Fund to finance construction.

Although the veteran community agreed that the best strategy going into the 77th Legislative Session was to create a “lockbox” account to finance the veterans home in northern Nevada, Governor Sandoval chose to advance progress on the construction of the veterans home even further. The “lockbox” would have allowed NDVS to create an account to capture excess revenue from the existing veterans home in order to fund the new home in northern Nevada. While this would have taken considerably longer than an appropriation, it was preferable to waiting.

During the 77th Legislative Session, however, two bills changed the dynamic dramatically from the “lockbox” approach. The first was Assembly Bill 58, which authorized the veterans home in northern Nevada, Governor Sandoval chose to advance progress on the construction of the veterans home even further. The “lockbox” would have allowed NDVS to create an account to capture excess revenue from the existing veterans home in order to fund the new home in northern Nevada. While this would have taken considerably longer than an appropriation, it was preferable to waiting.

During the 77th Legislative Session, however, two bills changed the dynamic dramatically from the “lockbox” approach. The first was Assembly Bill 58, which authorized the veterans home in northern Nevada, created a gift account for it, and made various other accommodations in the Nevada Revised Statutes. The second bill was the Governor’s CIP bill, Assembly Bill 505, which appropriated more than a million dollars in plan and design money for the veteran's home in northern Nevada.

Since the passage of these bills, the design process has begun. The architecture has been chosen and has begun work; community convenings have been held in Reno and in Carson City; a survey addressing the need for a veterans home in northern Nevada has been launched; and needs assessment has been conducted to determine the size and type of the location necessary has also been completed. With AB58 and AB505 during the last session, which is in addition to the progress achieved towards this
PRIORITY 2. Survivors’ Tax Exemption

NRS 372.325 provides a State sales tax exemption for Nevada National Guard Members and their families during times that the service member is deployed. This tax exemption is available on sales of tangible personal property to deployed members of the National Guard as long as they and their qualifying dependents are living at the same physical address and that address is in Nevada. Those eligible for the exemption are provided a letter of exemption based on the start and end dates of active duty mobilization orders, specified on the individual’s letter of exemption.

Over the last decade of war, countless Nevada families have waited while their loved ones, either in the National Guard, Reserve, or Active components, have deployed into harm’s way. Too many of these families have suffered deep personal loss when their deployed loved one gave their last full measure for our nation during wartime. While there are non-profit efforts providing death benefits and other support to the families in Nevada, like the Nevada Military Support Alliance, the personal devastation can spread into all aspects of the surviving family’s life.

Commonly, surviving families suffer immediate and prolonged financial hardship. The death benefits and other immediate support can help them immediately and through the most difficult times, but the families can often find themselves having to rebuild completely. Many families who suffer these tragedies find themselves having to sell their homes to downsize, trade in or purchase a new vehicle, all while managing substantial life insurance payments. These necessary life changes can happen suddenly, forcing these immediate and costly purchases. Currently service members and their families can receive a tax exemption while they are deployed. Allowing surviving family members the same opportunity to be exempt from state sales tax during a fixed period would help them navigate through this incredibly difficult time by reducing some of the financial stress they are sure to encounter.

PRIORITY 3. State Appropriation to Assist the Adopt-a-Vet Dental Program Not-for-Profit

Eligibility for dental care at VA hospitals is extraordinarily restrictive. Dental care through the VA hospitals is only covered for those veterans who are 100% service-connected disabled, who have suffered a jaw or mouth injury while in the service, or have been a Prisoner of War. Within the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Reno, only an estimated 5% of the 30,000 enrolled veterans are eligible for dental care through the VA.

The Adopt-a-Vet Dental Program (AAVP) is a Reno-based, Nevada non-profit organization that was established in response to an epidemic of oral health disease among veterans in northern Nevada due to low-incomes and lack of coverage. AAVP is based on the recognition that poor oral health has a tremendous and negative impact on an individual’s overall quality of life. According to the Website of the AAVP, the program is designed to “provide pro bono dental care to low-income military veterans through the recruitment of dentists and other dental specialists and to raise funds to offset dental lab and other related costs.”

The AAVP is primarily funded through private donations which can be submitted through the website and through in-kind donations of the volunteering dentists with whom they work. While these private donations certainly help veterans obtain dental care in northern Nevada, there is always a need for more funds in order to assist the growing number of veterans who reside in Nevada. As such, they request an appropriation from the State of Nevada to provide funding to assist the Adopt-a-Vet Dental Program in its mission of providing more veterans with dental care.
PRIORITY 4. Expansion of Assembly Bill 260 to Remove Two-Year Requirement for Residency

Assembly Bill 260 passed during the 77th Legislative Session, and aims to address the needs of returning veterans using the various Post-9/11 G.I. Bill benefits at Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) Institutions. AB260 aimed to address a concern that returning veterans who were not Nevada natives could face considerable debt due to being charged non-resident fees (out-of-state tuition). The bill was fully supported by the Chancellor of the Nevada System of Higher Education.

Although the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill is one of the most generous VA benefits in the federal VA's history, it will not pay out-of-state tuition for veterans wishing to attend public schools outside of their home state. Since the VA cannot fund out-of-state tuition, veterans' VA educational benefits will not be able to cover the full cost of tuition and the veteran will be responsible for paying any additional fees that are incurred due to out-of-state tuition charges. This can result in thousands of dollars of debt for a single veteran attending and Nevada institution of higher learning.

AB260 was written to amend section 396.540 of the NRS, specifically as it relates to in-state tuition exemptions for veteran students in Nevada. As a result of the bill, the language of NRS 396.540 has been changed and currently reads as follows:

A tuition charge must not be assessed against members of the Armed Forces of the United States who are on active duty and stationed at a military installation in the State of Nevada; and except as otherwise provided in subsection 3, veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States who were honorably discharged within the 2 years immediately preceding the date of matriculation of the veteran at a university, state college or community college within the System.

In other words, if the veteran or service member was not a resident of Nevada but relocated to the state after his or her service to attend school, they would be granted in-state tuition rates and not non-resident rates. This change applied so long as the service member was applying within two years of their separation from the military. As such, there are veterans who are attending NSHE institutions and are paying out-of-state tuition fees, a situation that can potentially cause financial problems for veterans who are using their VA education benefits.

The purpose of the proposed legislation would be to amend the language of NRS 396.540 as it relates to the two-year requirement. Specifically, the priority recommends the removal of any time limit for those student veterans attending NSHE schools using their G.I. Bill benefits. There is also national legislation that would go beyond the two-year requirement if passed.

PRIORITY 5. Military Licensure Reciprocity

As former members of the armed forces, many veterans have obtained specialized skills and training that can often be translated into jobs that are offered by the private sector. These specializations cover a wide array of skill sets, from commercial driving to welding to land surveying. These are skills that service members learn and use while they are in the military, often becoming experts in their respective fields.

Since the military has its own training schools and requirements for such jobs, it does not always require the traditional issuance of licenses and certifications in order to be qualified to perform these tasks. Outside of the military, these skills can require years of training and thousands of dollars in order to be properly licensed to work in Nevada. For veterans who already have such skills due to their years of service in the military, these costs can be seen as redundant and unnecessary, and worse, they can prevent them from joining the workforce upon their release from the military.

The purpose of this proposed legislation is to help facilitate the transition of service members from the Armed Forces to the private sector. By recognizing the military’s training and requirements as equivalent to that in the private sector, the State of Nevada can help put veterans to work in their
specialized fields immediately, without having to go through the added hassle of attending a trade school in order to obtain the special licenses, certificates, and training for skills that they already have.

During the 77th Legislative Session, Assembly Bill 349 was introduced by Assemblywoman Irene Bustamante Adams. The point of the bill was to create licensure reciprocity opportunities for service members, veterans, and their families traveling between states and jurisdictions on military duty assignments. The bill did not pass. Future legislation should incorporate these positive aspects of AB349, but include general licensure provisions for federal licensing and training organizations such as the U.S. Military, a mechanism to capture and share information on veteran applicants, and place veteran representatives on appropriate licensure boards and bodies.

**PRIORITY 6. Establish Veteran Centers throughout the State**

There are a large number of drop-in and service centers throughout the entire State of Nevada, ranging from Elko, Fallon, Reno, Las Vegas, Henderson, and numerous other locations. Some of these centers are operated by the State of Nevada, others by the federal VA and other agencies, non-profit organizations, and other service providers. However, even with these service centers in place, and even though they serve thousands of veterans, there remains more to be done.

The purpose of this proposed legislation is to expand the reach and capabilities of veteran service centers throughout the state. Achieving this priority should be done through developing a coalition of service providers and encouraging them to network through the Green Zone Network or other platforms, turning existing outreach assets to serve as veteran service centers, or funding the development of new efforts, among other approaches. If done well, better care and attention to the growing number of veterans and returning service members can be achieved.

**PRIORITY 11. Purple Heart License Plate to Receive Same Privileges as Disabled Veteran License Plate**

According to NRS 482.377, a license plate inscribed with “Disabled Veteran” or “Veteran Who Is Disabled” and “Ex-Prisoner of War” may be issued to a veteran of the Armed Forces of the United States who, as a result of his or her service, has suffered a 100% service-connected disability and who receives compensation from the United States for the disability. If the veteran has been captured and held prisoner by a military force of a foreign nation, he or she is entitled to specially designed license plates inscribed with the words “EX PRISONER OF WAR” and three or four consecutive numbers. This license plate entitles the holder to park in spaces provided to handicapped persons, according to NRS 484B.467.

NRS 482.3775 states that veterans of the American armed forces who have been awarded Purple Heart medal are entitled “to specially designed license plates, which indicate that the veteran is a recipient of the Purple Heart.” The holder of these specialty license plates also receives a fee reduction. They do not, however, receive the same parking privileges as those outlined for disabled veterans and former Prisoners of War as outlined by NRS 482.377.

This proposed legislation would aim to amend the statute for Purple Heart license plates so that the holders received the same parking benefits as disabled veterans and former Prisoners of War.

**PRIORITY 11. Veterans Remains Officers**

The Website of the Missing in America Project (MIAP) states that there are thousands of unidentified cremated veteran remains that sit on shelves in funeral homes across the United States.

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15 The next five priorities all received the same number of votes from the veterans, service members, and service providers at the Veterans Legislative Symposium, and are listed here as equals in no particular order.
Programs such as MIAP are working to ensure the honorable and respectful interment of all veterans, especially those who are unidentified in funeral homes. MIAP has worked to bring numerous Nevada veterans to their final resting place in recent years.

Governor Sandoval addressed this important issue by signing Assembly Bill 124 during the 76th Legislative Session. As the first piece of legislation he signed as Governor, AB124 required that funeral home directors notify the NDVS if they knew or believed that they had the remains of a veteran who could be interred in a Nevada Veteran Memorial Cemetery. Numerous non-profit and veteran service organizations have worked with NDVS and funeral directors in the state to assist ensuring compliance with this law.

In 2010, the State of California introduced bill California Assembly Bill 1644, which “allows prescribed entities in possession of the cremated remains of veterans, upon the request of a veterans’ remains organization, to release specified information and remains to a veterans’ remains organization for the purpose of interment.” Beyond this legislative language, AB1644 created Veteran Remains Officer positions for each county in California, and empowered them to obtain identifying information and accept the cremated remains of veterans for interment. These positions are held by volunteers throughout the state.

The purpose of this proposed legislation would be to facilitate the honorable interment of unclaimed remains of veterans in the State of Nevada, much like the legislation that was proposed in California’s AB1644. In doing so, the State of Nevada can participate in an effort to help locate, identify and inter the unclaimed remains of veterans throughout the state, and allow for these veterans to be interred with the honor and respect they deserve. It can also build upon the success of AB124 from the 76th Legislative Session.


Separating from the military can be a daunting task for many veterans. The armed forces provide a number of services and resources to its service members, including a paycheck, health care, dental care, housing, food allowance, among other things. When service members separate from the military, many of them have to find ways to replace these services in the private sector, which can often be time consuming, confusing and expensive.

While plenty of resources exist to assist veterans as they transition out of the military, many of these resources may not be made known to the veteran. Oftentimes resources can be difficult to locate or to differentiate from each other in the vast multitude of services that exist for veterans.

The purpose of this proposed legislation would be to develop a comprehensive directory of veteran resources that are available throughout the State of Nevada. The directory should be created online so that it can be updated and developed more easily than a print manual can be. Creating and maintaining such a list can better assist the increasing amount of veterans who are residing in Nevada.

PRIORITY 11. Erik’s Law

Many service members of the Armed Forces are subject to experiences that most other people may never face, especially if they have seen combat. As such, there has been a large number of service members separating from the military with PTSD or TBI, which could possibly affect their ability to live ordinary lives and may place them at a higher risk of suicide.

One such case was occurred when a veteran took his own life after becoming stranded in Idaho with no cell phone or means of communication. While there was an attempt to get local law enforcement to search for Erik Jorgenson, some admit that more could have been done to search for Erik and possibly find him and save his life.
A proposed bill commonly known as “Erik’s Law” would address this issue by putting at-risk veterans of suicide on high alert (much like that of the “Amber Alert”) so that local law enforcement officers can help find and save veterans from potentially taking their own lives. The bill would require law enforcement agencies to adopt Crisis Intervention Training that is specific to veterans who are at risk of suicide, as well as continuing education to make law enforcement officers aware of these risks.

**PRIORITY 11. Reduce Percentage Required for Disabled Veterans Hunting Licenses**

Currently Nevada offers a hunting and fishing license to veterans with a service-connected disability of 50%. This high percentage of disability required for reduced hunting and fishing licenses excludes many veterans with a service-connected disability. The purpose of this legislation is to change the percentage from 50% to 10%.

**PRIORITY 12. State Agency Liaisons**

One of the key concepts of the Green Zone Initiative is that there is an overwhelming amount of services, benefits, resources, and opportunities available to service members, veterans, and their families. Instead of new programs, one way to improve the delivery of these services is increased collaboration between existing service providers. This will also assist the development of new innovations that improve services to the veteran community as well.

Governor Sandoval has done a great deal to increase this collaboration and policy development. In 2012, he signed Executive Order 2012-15 creating the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs (ICVA), which he later signed into law after Assembly Bill 58 passed through the legislature during the 77th Legislative Session. This body established a statewide working group of relevant agency directors and federal and local representatives to identify opportunities to improve services and develop legislative recommendations.

Now that the ICVA has facilitated collaboration at the Director level, there is a need to create a similar collaboration between the agency at the public contact level. This new layer of coordination would not only help to build collaboration between departments, but also serve as veterans resource specialists when dealing with members of the public. They would be encouraged to share best practices, build interagency activities, and facilitate necessary training such as suicide prevention training, veterans resource awareness, military culture training, and more.

Based on the tribal liaison model, agency veteran liaisons would serve voluntarily at the appointment of the executive branch agency directors. They would meet monthly, convened by the Nevada Department of Veterans Services, to develop priorities and opportunities to collaborate. While it would not be required that these liaisons be veterans, they would be required that they educate themselves and others on the services, benefits, resources, and opportunities available to veterans in Nevada.

**PRIORITY 13. Veterans Hiring Preferences at Cities and Counties**

The State of Nevada currently has a five- or ten-point hiring preference for veterans and disabled veterans, respectively. The Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs has developed numerous recommendations that would create enhancements to these preferences for the upcoming legislative session. While there have been considerable improvements of veterans services in local governments throughout the state, similar employment preferences do not exist at the city and county level. Legislation that would allow for equivalent preferences between state and local governments would greatly increase employment opportunities for transitioning service members and veterans in Nevada.
PRIORITY 14. Veterans Employment Focus

The three focus areas of the Green Zone Initiative are employment, education, and wellness. These broad categories are intended to break down the silos between the various service providers by providing conceptual service areas to coordinate around, and as such, they are intended to represent a continuum—transitioning service members require civilian education, vocational or scholastic, to transition into or advance within the civilian workforce, and the more fully employed they are the more they will fit comfortably into Nevada’s communities, access health care, and so on. While the education and wellness focus areas are important, focusing on fully employing veterans will provide the greatest catalyst for progress in all three areas.

PRIORITY 15. State Flag Program

On Veterans Day of 2013, Governor Sandoval signed Executive Order 2013-22 creating the State Flag Program. The program made it so that friends, supporters, family members, and others can request that a Nevada state flag that has flown over the Capitol building be shipped to a Nevada service member who is serving abroad. The program is administered through the Nevada Department of Veterans Services and the Buildings and Grounds Division. The order required that the Nevada Department of Veterans Services create a fund that could accept donations to make this program free of charge to those wishing to support their friends or loved ones. Creating this program in statute would ensure that it would exist beyond this administration.

PRIORITY 16. “Individual Unemployability” Considered the Same as 100% Disability for State Purposes

Nevada offers a property tax exemption to combat veterans. Further, it offers increased exemptions for veterans with a service-connected disability of 60% or more. The amount of exemptions that are or will be available to disabled veterans varies from $6,250 to $20,000 of assessed valuation, depending on the percentage of disability and the year filed.

To qualify, the veteran must have an honorable separation from the service and be a resident of Nevada. The widow or widower of a disabled veteran who was eligible for this exemption at the time of his or her death may also be eligible to receive this exemption, which can either be applied to a veteran’s vehicle tax or personal property tax.

“Individual Unemployability” is a part of federal VA’s disability compensation program that allows VA to pay certain veterans compensation at the 100% rate, even though VA has not rated their service-connected disabilities at the total level. A veteran must be unable to maintain gainful employment as a result of his or her service-connected disabilities. Additionally, a veteran must have one service-connected disability ratable at 60% or more, or two or more service-connected disabilities, at least one disability ratable at 40% or more with a combined rating of greater than 70%.

This proposed legislation aims to apply the same tax exemptions for those who fall under the Individual Unemployability program as those who are 100% disabled. This recommendation is based on the argument that those designated through the Individual Unemployability program are recognized as 100% disabled by the federal government and should therefore be recognized as 100% disabled by the State of Nevada. This legislative change would have an impact on Nevada counties, where the revenues are collected.
PRIORITY 17. Amend Paperwork Requirements for Veterans Drivers License Designation to include Retired Military Identification Cards

Currently, numerous states have established a veteran designation option for their driver’s licenses and identification cards. The designation varies from a small “v” somewhere on the card, to the word “veteran” written out. Anecdotal reports suggest that such legislation has created numerous benefits for their respective veterans as well as their veteran service agencies, all with little or no cost to the state for processing.

The benefits of having a veteran designator on a state-issued identification card or driver’s license are numerous. A veteran would be able to use it to secure benefits offered to veterans and service members through retailers and other commercial venues. Further, it would also allow the veteran to secure benefits offered at the state level through municipal, county, and state agencies.

An additional benefit to the veterans designator would be to the state. Determining the demographics and geography of the veterans is an extraordinarily important effort, but one that has seldom been done with any real accuracy. Over the years there have been several efforts, including a self-identifying measure through interactions with the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). This has been implemented by that agency, but self-identification has resulted in no clearer of a picture of Nevada’s veteran demographics. Because of the incentive to the veteran listed above, it is possible that this initiative will result in a more accurate measure of the state’s veteran population.

During the 77th Legislative Session, Assembly Bill 242 passed, creating the veterans designation on the Nevada driver’s license and identification cards, and as of January 2014, the Nevada Department of Motor Vehicles has implemented this initiative. However, during this time, veterans have had trouble receiving this benefit because of the requirement to produce form DD214 upon application. This proposed legislation would amend the law to allow veterans to use official retiree paperwork, such as the military retiree identification card to obtain a veteran designation on their driver’s license.

PRIORITY 18. Legislation Revising Provisions Governing Alimony and Spousal Support in Cases Involving Veterans with a Service-Connected Disability

Assembly Bill 271 was introduced by Assemblyman Jim Wheeler during the 77th Legislative Session. If passed, AB271 provided that in determining an award of alimony or spousal support when granting a divorce involving a veteran, the court should not take federal veteran disability benefits awarded to the other spouse for a disability connected to his or her service in the military into consideration. Further, AB271 stated that any federal disability benefits awarded to a veteran for a disability connected to his or her service in the military should not be considered community property when granting a divorce involving a veteran. The bill failed to pass.

PRIORITY 19. Mefloquine Testing for Nevada National Guard

Mefloquine hydrochloride is a medication widely used in the prevention of malaria for many service members during the deployments in support of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars. The Food and Drug Administration’s medication guide for Mefloquine states that “some people who take [Mefloquine] have sudden serious mental problems” that can include severe anxiety, paranoia, hallucinations, depression, restlessness, unusual behavior, confusion, and suicidal ideations. Studies have suggested that Mefloquine can cause changes in vision in cases where the medication was administered for long periods, and recommend that eye examinations be conducted in cases where the patient reports changes in vision.
PRIORITY 21. Domestic Partners Interred at Nevada Veteran Memorial Cemeteries

Nevada’s Veteran Memorial Cemeteries in Boulder City and Fernley are federally-funded, state-operated facilities. Accordingly, the State must follow federal standards and regulations for interment eligibility. Current federal law does not allow for same-sex partners to be interred at Department of Veterans Affairs cemeteries.

In early 2013, VA Secretary Eric Shinseki allowed the remains of Nancy Lynchild to be interred at a national VA cemetery in Oregon. Lynchild, the registered domestic partner of an Air Force Lieutenant Colonel, was the first person to request this policy waiver from the Secretary, and the first he granted. The VA has not formally changed its policy, even with the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy within the Department of Defense.

PRIORITY 21. Require the State to Apply for Construction of VA National Cemeteries in Northern and Southern Nevada

The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) seeks to honor “veterans and their families with final resting places in national shrines and with lasting tributes that commemorate their service and sacrifice to our nation.” They do this by aiming to provide veterans burial options within veteran cemeteries “within 75 miles of 90% of the veterans across the country.” To do this, the VA has established a three-tiered effort.

The first tier facilities are the 131 National Cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico. These cemeteries are operated by the federal government, which currently maintains nearly 3.2 million gravesites. There are no National Cemeteries in Nevada, and the closest facilities to Reno and Las Vegas are in Sacramento and Bakersfield, California.

The next tier of facilities are the State Veteran Memorial Cemeteries funded by the NCA’s Veterans State Cemetery Grants Program. Through this program, these cemeteries are funded through initial construction grants, improvement grants, and interment fees of $700.00 paid to the State by the federal government for the interment of each veteran, making them federally funded, state operated cemeteries. Nevada has two State Veteran Memorial Cemeteries, one in Fernley and one in Boulder City.

In its 2013 budget, the VA created a third burial option in order to increase accessibility for those veterans in rural parts of the country. The National Veterans Burial Grounds are veterans sections built within existing public or private cemeteries and they are to be operated by the federal government with support of the local community. Elko, Nevada was selected as one of eight sparsely populated rural communities across the country to receive a National Veterans Burial Ground.

NCA determines the need for National Cemeteries through population studies and through the budget process. There is no formal application process for these facilities. Further, the state cemetery facilities in Fernley and Boulder City would likely preclude the addition of National Cemeteries in northern and southern Nevada.
A. Proposed Structure Changes for the Nevada Department of Veterans Services

Over the past decade, the Nevada Department of Veterans Services (NDVS) has grown in size in order to both support wellness programs for an aging veterans population and to support education and employment programs for veterans returning home from wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. This expansion was necessary not only to connect urban and rural veterans with services needed to successfully facilitate their reintegration into our communities, but also to ensure Nevada capitalizes on the talents and energy this educated, dedicated, and dynamic workforce will bring to Nevada. In order to effectively manage and operate these new and expanded programs, the following recommendations are proposed.

Recommendation 1. Add a new Deputy Director for Veteran Health Care (DDVHC) and change the existing Deputy Director’s title to Deputy Director for Veteran Education and Employment (DDVEE) to capture the new functions and responsibilities inherent in this position.

The current NDVS Director and Deputy Director lead and manage a complex organization that helps ensure service members, veterans, and their families understand and have access to opportunities that improve their lives. In the past ten years, NDVS has expanded services and outreach efforts. Even more recently, NDVS has further focused its efforts around the focus areas of the Green Zone Initiative: wellness, education, and employment.

Wellness program growth includes the expansion of state veterans home programs, veteran suicide prevention efforts, and homeless veteran initiatives, as well as others. Adding a deputy to manage the growth in missions associated with veteran wellness will allow the existing Deputy Director to focus his or her efforts on veteran education and employment initiatives for both service members returning from conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan will improve our ability to support veterans of all eras. It will also allow NDVS to serve in a more strategic way, which is fitting given that it was recently elevated from an Office to a Department.

While the senior leader positions currently authorized in statute provide the necessary management oversight, a national best practice in state veterans departments is to provide specialized leadership in the area of medical care. These specialized leaders work with partners in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to ensure veterans and their families receive the very best medical care for which they are eligible, to manage existing Nevada Veterans health care services, and to develop and expand veteran health care services throughout Nevada. These services, which include domiciliary, skilled nursing, dementia care, adult day-care programs, and veteran mental health programs are best served by appointing a senior leader who has significant health care administrative experience and high level supervisory and managerial experience.

The DDVHC will represent the interests of Nevada service members, veterans, and their families at the federal, state, regional and community levels, including the U.S. Congress and Nevada Legislature. The DDVHC will foster positive working relationships and partnerships with many constituent groups that touch veteran communities and with a variety of interested stakeholders. Additionally, the DDVHC will serve as an advocate for Nevada veterans in health care-related issues. Ideally, this position would be appointed and serve Nevada’s interest in the concept development and design phase of our new Northern Nevada Veterans Home to ensure that this multi-million dollar project receives specialized attention to ensure that it is successfully developed. Finally, the DDVHC should be a resident of Nevada...
and a veteran as defined in the Nevada Revised Statutes, have at least seven years of progressively responsible health care administrative experience, with at least five years of high level supervisory, managerial or director experience.

The need for a DDVHC is driven, in part, by the expansion of state veterans home programs, veteran suicide prevention efforts, and other veteran wellness initiatives. For example, a critical initiative proposed by Governor Sandoval to meet the needs of aging veterans is the construction of a new northern Nevada veterans home. The construction of this new veterans home will likely add approximately 100 new employees to the agency, serve an approximate 100 new veterans at any given time, greatly expanding the health-related workload for the agency. Perhaps most important, this position can be funded through existing agency resources and not require a new appropriation from the legislature.

With the addition of the DDVHC, the current Deputy Director position should be refocused on the remaining Green Zone Initiative focus areas of employment and education. The DDVEE will maintain oversight on current, non-health care agency issues. This will mean directing operations at the Northern and Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemeteries, the Veteran Service Officer program, the rural outreach program (ROVER), the Women Veterans program, the Green Zone Initiative, and other agency outreach and service efforts.

If the legislature approves the recommendations made by the Student Veterans Advisory Council (SVAC) and the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs (ICVA), then the DDVEE will also take on additional duties. The SVAC recommended that the Governor move the State Approving Agency for veterans in higher education under the supervision of NDVS. The ICVA recommended that the Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation’s veteran employment program move under or work in conjunction with NDVS as well. If either or both of these changes take place, the new agency functions would fall under the DDVEE as well.

**Recommendation 2. Add agency IT manager to the NDVS staff.**

New and expanded NDVS missions and associated staff have resulted in a significant increase in IT staff workload. The immediate need is for one IT manager to supervise existing staff and IT workstudy positions, as well as to manage internal and external IT programs and systems. The addition of this position will allow NDVS to provide direct support for its existing locations and provide appropriate project management and support for other eGovernment initiatives.

NDVS’s expanded IT workload has developed from numerous programs and initiatives. For example, NDVS has been given administrative control over the Green Zone Network (GZN) Website, a statewide social networking platform that connects veterans with supporters to aid veterans in successfully reintegrating into communities. NDVS is developing a new Veterans Information System (VIS) web portal and database as part of a cooperative multi-state effort with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Additionally, NDVS has migrated two of its primary business programs to electronic records systems that manage both critical medical support to veterans in our skilled nursing facility and ensure accurate and timely billing. NDVS has increased four-fold the support to Nevada’s rural veterans, with the opening of new rural offices and rural traveling outreach routes, driving new satellite communication and IT requirements. Finally, planning for a multi-million dollar Northern Nevada Veterans Home is also driving the need for ongoing program collaboration with project architects and construction managers in order to identify needed technologies to support this state-of-the-art skilled nursing facility.

During this period of expansion, the NDVS IT department has remained at two employees who are responsible for technical operations for the entire department. These IT positions are paid for by and were established for support of operations at the Nevada State Veterans Home (NSVH) in Boulder.
City, but the responsibilities of the employees in these positions have expanded to support these higher-level, department-wide functions.

Ongoing, agency-wide IT tasks accomplished by these two employees include management of the department's email and database servers, productivity and electronic records applications, programming or support of internal and public Websites, server and workstation deployment and support, and IT security, network and WAN links and telephone service at many department locations. Along with internal IT operations for the Department, NDVS IT staff also provides direct support to the public in the form of technical support for residents and family members at the NSVH and frequent setup and support for other veteran service organizations utilizing NDVS facilities for their events. NDVS provides media centers and video conference links for veteran service organizations to hold regular meetings and special events and at the Nevada State Veterans Home, NDVS IT staff provide telephone service, satellite TV, and in house broadcasts of movies and religious services as well as a free wireless computer network that residents and their families can use while at the home. In short, the IT staff created to support the home is fully engaged in this mission; with the addition of the many new IT programs and processes, NDVS has neither the number nor the appropriate classification of IT employees necessary to appropriately accomplish the many new tasks for which they are responsible.

This position will become even more crucial when the second veterans home is complete as additional IT staff will be required to provide server and workstation support for that location as in the existing home. The addition of an agency IT manager would give NDVS the ability oversee technical operations and provide direction and additional support for current and future agency IT initiatives within the Department, and thereby better serve America’s heroes.

**Recommendation 3. Add 1 groundskeeper, 1 maintenance worker, and 1 irrigation specialist position at the Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery (SNVMC), increasing grounds keeping staff from eight to 11.**

Federal funding to help operate our state veterans cemeteries has increased by 244% since 2006 (from $300 to $734 per interment), however, SNVMC staffing levels have remained constant. If operational requirements had also remained constant, maintaining existing staffing levels would make sense. However, as the second busiest state veterans cemetery in the nation, workload associated with expanding cemetery grounds has risen tremendously.

When the SNVMC opened in 1990, 5.2 acres were maintained by two groundskeepers. By 2006, 27.1 acres were being maintained by eight groundskeepers. Today, the acreage has grown by 59% to 40.5 acres and is still maintained by eight groundskeepers (see Figure 1).
The current staffing level of eight employees is not sufficient to meet grounds keeping, irrigation, and equipment maintenance needs of SNVMC. With the expansion of the irrigation system and cemetery fleet as a result of the increase in acreage, groundskeepers are diverted to perform tasks associated with maintaining and repairing irrigation systems and vehicles. Not only does this reduce the available hours spend towards grounds keeping and burial duties, employees not classified for mechanical and irrigation functions must perform these tasks. Additionally, the SNVMC has been unable to meet requests for burial services on weekends and cannot always accommodate requested burial dates on peak days. Finally, the number of complaints from family and visitors concerning the condition of the grass is increasing, especially grass over newly buried veterans.

With the addition of the following positions, the SNVMC appearance will improve, state employees will be performing appropriate functions, and we will be better able to accommodate burial schedule requests.

- **Fleet Services Worker II – Pay Grade 25.** The incumbent will perform semi-skilled level repair and maintenance work necessary to keep the cemetery fleet of light, medium, and heavy
construction and maintenance equipment operational; perform preventive maintenance; issue vehicles to employees; and perform basic diagnostic and repair work. More complex diagnostic and repair work is referred to higher-level Fleet Service Workers, supervisor, mechanic or outside repair facility.

- **Grounds Maintenance Worker IV (Irrigation Specialist) – Pay Grade 24.** Incumbent provides assistance in a specialized phase of grounds service to a Grounds Supervisor at a large facility. Under general supervision of a Grounds Supervisor, perform technical work on facility irrigation systems on a full-time basis including assisting supervisors lay out new construction or modifications to existing systems; inspect system for proper function and diagnose malfunctions; and schedule irrigation according to campus events, seasonal demands and adverse weather conditions. In addition, incumbent will perform preventive maintenance and make repairs by maintaining and cleaning wells and storage tanks and repairing controllers, valves lines, sprinklers and backflow preventers.

- **Grounds Maintenance Worker II (Grounds Maintenance Only) – Pay Grade 22.** Under close supervision, incumbents perform the most routine duties associated with maintaining grounds.

**Recommendation 4. Add agency Public Information Officer (PIO) to the NDVS Staff.**

The duties for NDVS outlined in Nevada Revised Statutes Chapter 417 are numerous. In addition to serving veterans with filing claims and fulfilling various other needs, NDVS also has a statutory requirement to provide important information throughout the State of Nevada and the veteran community. Specifically, NRS 417 states that NDVS shall “coordinate activities of veterans’ organizations” and “serve as a clearinghouse and disseminate information relating to veterans’ benefits.”

Like other State agencies, NDVS has a public information program in order to fulfill these requirements and also to provide the public and media with timely and accurate information on matters of public interest. In past years, this position has been accomplished through a contract paid for with revenue from the Veterans License Plate Gift Account. While meeting some agency information needs, the contracted employee is not a fully integrated member of the NDVS team and hiring a state employee would improve operations by employing a fulltime PIO under direct supervision. Eliminating the draw on the gift account will also allow NDVS to provide more programs and services to Nevada’s veterans.

Functions to be accomplished would include:

- Provide information to media outlets by generating news releases, holding press conferences and acting as department spokesperson and media liaison to disseminate agency related information to inform and educate the public.
- Monitor media coverage and respond to media inquiries.
- Consult with department officials in responding to media inquiries and promoting department programs and services.
- Prepare, review, and edit news conferences, press releases, scripts, articles, and brochures.
- Maintain contact with local media by participating in video and telephone interviews.
- Collect data and review materials for media relations use.
- Establish and maintain relationships with representatives of community, employee, and public interest groups.
Conduct public appearances, lectures, or exhibits in order to increase awareness and to promote goodwill for the agency.

Confer with agency personnel to identify trends and key group interests and public concerns.

Speak to various groups to provide information that may include delivering speeches and presentations.

Provide training to employees on media protocols.

B. Changes to agency duties and other sections of NRS 417

Currently, the duties for NDVS are outlined in NRS 417.090. They are paraphrased below in order to provide context for the recommendations to follow.

The Director and Deputy Director shall:

- Assist service members, veterans, and their families in preparing, submitting and presenting any claim against the United States, or any state, for any compensation, aid or benefit.
- Aid, assist, encourage and cooperate with every nationally recognized service organization.
- Give aid, assistance and counsel to each and every problem, question and situation, individual as well as collective, affecting any veteran.
- Coordinate activities of veterans’ organizations.
- Serve as a clearinghouse and disseminate information relating to veterans’ benefits.
- Conduct studies that will assist veterans to obtain benefits.
- And others.

While these are important duties, NDVS believes that certain new duties and other changes to NRS 417 would allow the agency to provide more comprehensive benefits to service members, veterans, and their families in Nevada.

These changes to statute will have a tremendous impact on the way the agency conducts business going forward. They will provide continuity for the agency; they will allow the agency to coordinate and communicate better with the veteran community; and they will provide more predictability for policy, service, and other changes. All of the changes outlined below can be done without a General Fund appropriation, as any of the necessary funding can be provided by the License Plate Gift Account.

Recommendation 1. Host annual Veterans summit/training conference, to include a student veterans conference.

As outlined above, NDVS has a duty to coordinate with veteran service organizations, serve as a clearinghouse for information, and otherwise coordinate activities among veteran organizations. This is often done through various public engagements, which are usually done regionally. This recommendation would require that NDVS host an annual conference in the state to bring together elements of the veteran community.

This conference would allow the agency to bring existing conferences together with suggested future conferences. The NDVS Women Veterans Program holds regular wellness events throughout the state; the Green Zone Initiative holds convenings around its focus areas of wellness, education, and employment; NDVS also holds the biannual legislative symposium; and other activities. Additionally, the Student Veterans Advisory Council recommended that NDVS also assist in hosting an annual student veterans conference, which could be incorporated into this activity. With respect to Recommendation 7,
below, such a conference would also provide a training opportunity for the statewide veteran service officers, either state employees, employees of other organizations, or volunteers.

Pulling together all of these activities under one, multi-day conference would have several benefits for the veteran community. The consistency of the event would allow for greater buy-in and reduce duplication. It would also focus efforts annually, which would allow the quality of the program to increase over time, allow for cost savings, and provide opportunities for increased collaboration. If this conference is created in statute, it would also ensure that this progress continues into the future.

**Recommendation 2. Establish Veterans Day at the Legislature as a statutory day of observance.**

For at least a decade, NDVS has hosted Veterans Day at the Legislature, often with the support of the Nevada National Guard. This event, usually held in March during a legislative year, begins with a high level meeting between veteran activists and leaders and public officials at the Carson City Veterans Hall. Key leaders from these groups then participate in a reading of a concurrent resolution honoring the fallen in Iraq and Afghanistan in each house of the legislature, followed by a community luncheon. Veterans Day at the Legislature usually brings hundreds of veterans to Carson City, and provides an opportunity for the public to engage with service members, veterans, and their families. It has also provided an opportunity for veteran leaders to meet individually with policymakers and public sector leaders. All sides have generally seen value in this program.

Over recent years it has become increasingly difficult to plan and organize such an event. Leadership changes, elections, and dealing with multiple agencies have added to the significant logistical and coordinating challenges as well. Creating Veterans Day at the Legislature in statute for a specific day of the week every other year would diminish these challenges greatly. This legislation will be modeled after Senate Bill 29 in the 77th session, which created Tribal Day at the Legislature.

**Recommendation 3. NDVS shall provide the statewide veteran community detailed legislative update in digital form by September 1 following each full legislative session.**

Throughout legislative and non-legislative years, NDVS takes on several responsibilities with respect to developing the veteran legislative agenda. During the even years, NDVS hosts the Veterans Legislative Symposium, where veterans gather to identify and prioritize legislative objectives. Immediately prior to the legislative session, usually in January of the odd years, NDVS hosts the Veterans Legislative Summit, which provides an opportunity to give the veteran community an update on which bills match their objectives, and what other bills they might be interested in. This report should only pertain to legislation that directly affects veterans.

As described in Recommendation 2, above, NDVS also hosts Veterans Day at the Legislature during the session. Veterans are very active in each of these efforts, many coming to hearings of interest and subscribing to the legislative update newsletter provided by NDVS. NDVS currently provides several updates on its Website, but there is no requirement that the agency provide a full report of what changes to state law took place during the previous legislative session, and how those changes might impact the veteran community. This recommended change to statute would require that such a report be provided following every full legislative session.

**Recommendation 4. Increase reporting requirements from agencies serving veterans and require NDVS to provide an annual report to the Legislative Commission modeled after NRS 417.105.**

NRS 417.105 requires that NDVS provide a report on preference programs for service-connected disabled veteran-owned businesses to the Legislative Commission before October of each
In order to develop this report, NDVS is required by statute to reach out to various entities to seek recommendations for improving the programs, and the agencies administering the preference programs are required to report program activities to NDVS annually as well. The preference provisions are created in NRS 333.3368 and 338.13846 for state purchasing and public works contracts, respectively.

This recommendation suggests that the format of NRS 417.105 be used to broaden the NDVS reporting requirements, as well as the requirement of other service providers and stakeholders. Credentialing boards and bodies should be required to report the number of veterans and service members they certify annually; the Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation should be required to report the number of veterans receiving unemployment insurance annually; the Nevada System of Higher Education should be required to report, per institution, the number of student veterans on campus, as well as their success rate; the Division of Human Resource Management should be required to report the number of veterans working in each agency; and so on. NDVS should be required to compile this information around the Green Zone Initiative focus areas of wellness, employment, and education in an annual report to the Legislative Commission before October 1 of each year.

**Recommendation 5. NDVS may develop a state disabled veterans recreation and wellness program.**

Technological advances have saved countless lives in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. While more lives have been saved, more service members have returned home as catastrophically wounded veterans, often relying on prosthetics and other technology to accommodate their new lives. NDVS would like to use Nevada’s position as a tourism, sport, and recreation state to develop a state disabled veterans recreation and wellness program to serve these veterans with activities and opportunities upon their return.

**Recommendation 6. Create a xeriscape option at the Veteran Memorial Cemeteries.**

NRS 417.200 states that “the cemetery superintendent shall ensure that the area immediately above and surrounding the interred remains in each veterans’ cemetery is landscaped with natural grass.” This law, which passed in 2007, has added substantial cost and decreased options for family members of deceased veterans. This recommendation aims to address both the increased cost and decreased options.

NDVS currently pays approximately $215,000 annually to water both of the cemeteries in Fernley and in Boulder City, and this cost will only increase as future veterans and their eligible family members are interred at either. The chart below shows the combined watering costs from FY2008 through the current year, as well as the percentage of increase annual. As shown below, the costs are climbing rapidly, and will only continue to do so as long as water rates climb and the acreage watered for each cemetery increases.
### Water Bills for Both Cemeteries (in dollars)

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<th>FY 08</th>
<th>FY09</th>
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<td></td>
<td>147,393</td>
<td>152,414</td>
<td>167,879</td>
<td>175,400</td>
<td>195,754</td>
<td>215,252</td>
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### Annual Percent Increase

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<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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Adding additional challenge is the fact that the cemeteries are not funded to provide sod for the plots of newly-interred veterans, requiring grass seed to be planted and keeping the agency out of compliance with NRS 417.200 for a considerable period of time after each new burial. Some family members and veterans have inquired as to whether they or their loved ones can be interred in a plot with a more typical desert landscape, or xeriscape as well.

The VA’s National Cemetery Administration, which funds and inspects the state cemeteries, has also addressed similar situations at some of the VA’s national cemeteries in desert locations. In recent years, the VA has introduced a water-wise cemetery program at their cemeteries in Bakersfield, California, Phoenix, Arizona, and El Paso, Texas, all areas with climates similar to Boulder City, Nevada. While they employ various resource management practices to reduce water consumption at these cemeteries, the centerpiece of their efforts has been going exclusively to xeriscaped plots. While there was resistance at first, they worked with local veteran communities to demonstrate their commitment to maintaining national shrine standards while still reducing water use, and have since received numerous sustainability awards for doing so.

This recommendation would not change current interments, or even cause a future patchwork of xeriscape and grass landscape gravesites. Instead, it would require that the respective superintendents of Nevada’s Veteran Memorial Cemeteries be required to develop a xeriscape section at each cemetery, allowing for those requesting xeriscape plots to have similar plots surrounding their plots. This change would provide a mechanism for reducing future water consumption and providing veterans and their families the greatest level of choice when it comes to being buried with the greatest degree of honor, dignity, and respect.

**Recommendation 7.** NDVS may certify or recertify Veteran Service Officers, state employee, private, or volunteer, on an annual basis.

There is currently no state standard for certification of Veteran Service Officers (VSO) in Nevada. VSOs, whether they are state employees, county employees, veteran service organization employees, or volunteers, approach the difficult task of veteran advocacy and support largely through federal and
national certifications. While this does allow for autonomy, it also means that the service provided to veterans in Nevada varies greatly.

Most VSOs in Nevada are certified by the federal VA through training provided by national Veteran Service Organizations. NDVS, for instance, relies on training provided by the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers, the American Legion (national), and the Veterans of Foreign Wars (national). Not only does training from national organizations greatly increase costs through travel and registration expenses, but it also prevents NDVS from standardizing any of the support services they provide for service members, veterans, and their families.

This recommendation calls for permissive language that would allow NDVS to be a state certifier for VSOs. This would allow non-agency VSOs to participate in state-provided training and take certifying tests. It would also allow NDVS to bring in national trainers for the statewide VSO community as well, saving cost and encouraging greater uniformity with respect to veterans advocacy.

In Recommendation 1 of this section, NDVS would be required to host an annual conference. This conference would provide an opportunity to train the VSO corps within the state of Nevada, to offer certification, and to formalize and grow the number of volunteers serving veterans in Nevada. All of this would combine for increased service to veterans, improved services, and improved coordination and collaboration.
Executive Summary: Although the report that follows is not a report that is required of the Veterans Services Commission (VSC), it falls within the Commission’s duties and responsibilities. Through this report, the VSC aims to support ongoing activities intended to support Nevada’s veterans and offer recommendations for future improvements. It was approved on December 11, 2014.

The report that follows provides several important contributions to the ongoing discussions surrounding improving services to Nevada’s veterans, service members, and their families. It provides an overview of the VSC’s duties and responsibilities, its reasons for submitting its first comprehensive report, an overview of its meetings held in 2014, its membership, and detailed recommendations. The report is directed to the Governor, the Legislature, and to the Director and Deputy Director of the Nevada Department of Veterans Services (NDVS).

Although the VSC considers the entire report to be a significant contribution, it believes that its most important aspect is the prioritized recommendations. The 10 recommendations approved by the VSC cover important topics such as continuing activities in support of reducing homelessness and suicide among Nevada’s veterans, supporting the construction of a second State Veterans Home in northern Nevada, increasing the reporting requirements for NDVS, and the development or support of innovative solutions for irrigation needs at Nevada’s Veteran Memorial Cemeteries, Veterans Court Programs, and Veteran Service Officer support in rural areas. All of these recommendations are intended to formally increase the VSC’s statutory role, which in turn will allow the VSC members to further improve service delivery for Nevada’s veterans.

It is the hope of the VSC that this report be considered along with the other important policy recommendations made by other veteran policy councils, and that they be considered by the Governor and the Legislature as early as the 78th Legislative Session. These recommendations should be considered the next step, and one of many, toward improving services, resources, benefits, and opportunities for Nevada’s veterans. Through this report, and future similar reports, the VSC believes that it can accomplish its goal of increasing its statutory role with respect to serving Nevada’s veterans.

Background: NRS 417.150 creates the Veterans Services Commission, establishes the composition of its members, its duties, and outlines requirements for its meetings. As the primary advisory body for state-funded veterans services in Nevada, the VSC brings together a diverse group of representatives from various veteran communities and includes State Legislators and members of the Northern and Southern Nevada Veteran Memorial Cemetery Advisory Committees. According to NRS 417.190, the current duties of the Veterans Services Commission include the following:

- Advise the Director and Deputy Director of the Nevada Department of Veterans Services.
- Make recommendations to the Governor, the Legislature, the Director and the Deputy Director regarding aid or benefits to veterans.

VSC members have often asked for a more substantive role in serving veterans in Nevada, including providing more input and having increased responsibilities on matters of import. Over recent years VSC members have received increased responsibilities, including choosing recipients for the “Veteran of the Month” award, assisting the NDVS Director in allocating funds from the License Plate Gift Account, assisting NDVS in sharing information back to their service organizations, establishing
criteria for being recognized as a Fallen Nevadan, and more. With these increased responsibilities, the VSC has shown that it is capable of providing even more support to NDVS and the veterans of Nevada.

One way that the VSC has chosen to increase its role is through providing a report and recommendations for the consideration of the Governor, the Legislature, and the Director and Deputy Director of NDVS. While the duties outlined in NRS 417.190 do not call for a formalized report to any of the entities the VSC is required to advise, it clearly allows for such recommendations. This report is intended to meet this need as identified by the VSC.

In order to prepare this report, the VSC met quarterly over the previous year, to include two special meetings called by the Chair to address specific issues. The meetings were held throughout Nevada and addressed specific agency needs, carried out the duties of the VSC as identified by NRS 417.190, and to provide updates on important issues to the veteran community. Biographies for each member are provided in Appendix A of this report.

The January 2014 VSC meeting was held at the Nevada State Veterans Home in Boulder City. The meeting included updates from the veteran service organizations represented on the Commission, agency updates from NDVS, selection of the “Veteran of the Month” awardees, and other important business items. Following the meeting, the Commissioners took an oversight tour of the Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery as required by the NDVS Memorial Cemetery Standard Operating Procedures guide.

The March 2014 VSC meeting was also held at the Nevada State Veterans Home in Boulder City, but in order to preserve agency resources, it was also held via videoconference at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Regional Office in Reno and the VA Medical Center in Las Vegas. As with the January meeting, this meeting provided an opportunity for detailed overviews of agency and veteran service organization matters were provided, updates on various legislative activities, and other important matters. Of note were discussions on NDVS data metrics, the establishment of the Women Veterans Advisory Council and the Nevada State Veterans Home Advisory Council, and a fiscal overview for the agency.

The June meeting of the VSC was held at Great Basin College in Elko and via videoconference to the College of Southern Nevada and Western Nevada College. In addition to typical VSC business items, members of the public also noted the importance of ensuring that veteran living in rural Nevada have the support that they need for filing disability claims and quality gaps were identified in some volunteer veteran service officers, which needs to be addressed. Another important activity of this meeting was the unanimous approval of the License Plate Gift Account report, which amounted to a full endorsement of the NDVS Director’s decisions to use those funds to serve Nevada’s veterans.

A VSC Special Meeting was held out of cycle in August via teleconference to approve the criteria for Fallen Nevadans as established by the Veteran Memorial Affairs subcommittee. Regular meetings resumed in September with an in-person and teleconferenced meeting held at the Northern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Fernley. Similar topics from the previous meetings were covered during this meeting in Fernley, and it also concluded with a cemetery oversight tour as required by the NDVS Memorial Cemetery Standard Operating Procedures guide.

An overview of these meetings is important for a number of reasons. First, it exhibits the seriousness with which the VSC approaches its task of advising the Governor, Legislature, and Director and Deputy Director of NDVS. Second, these meetings also provide an important opportunity to the Commissioners to identify many of the findings addressed by each of the recommendations outlined below.

**Recommendations:** The recommendations below were voted on and approved by the VSC. They are based on the various findings discussed during the quarterly and special meetings, and also on the particular expertise of the various members. They are outlined in order of priority below.
Recommendation 1. The Nevada State Legislature should develop a Concurrent Resolution to honor Nevada’s Fallen during the 78th Legislative Session.

Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, Nevadans have served in support of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, some paying the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of their nation. Nevada has recognized their sacrifice in numerous ways: Governor Sandoval established the Book of Nevada’s Fallen, which is displayed in the Capitol Building; as mentioned above, Senate Bill 230 authorized the construction of a Gold Star Memorial dedicated to Nevada’s fallen soldiers on the grounds of the Capitol; and nearly every two years, the Nevada State Legislature has recognized the State’s fallen through an Assembly Concurrent Resolution read aloud and reflected upon during Veterans and Military Day at the Legislature.

While this Resolution is symbolic, it provides important recognition for the fallen. More important, it provides recognition of their sacrifices for the families that survive them. The VSC strongly urges the continuation of this important effort as the primary legislative priority for the next Legislative Session.

Recommendation 2. Supports the construction of a Northern Nevada Veterans Home.

The VSC fully endorses Governor Sandoval’s priority for the construction of a second Nevada State Veterans Home in Northern Nevada. This project has been a major priority for the veteran community since the establishment of the Nevada State Veterans Home in Boulder City, and the VSC is pleased with current progress. It is crucial that this progress continues.

Recent progress includes an appropriation during the 77th Legislative Session for initial planning and design for the Home, location selection, and continued work with the VA to secure the federal matching dollars for Home construction. Governor Sandoval has also made the construction of the Home a top priority for his Capital Improvement Projects budget. Further, this construction is supported by an independent needs assessment commissioned by NDVS in 2014.

In addition to construction of a Nevada State Veterans Home in Northern Nevada, the VSC encourages the State of Nevada to continue to explore future needs for the state’s aging veteran population. This should include studies of the distribution of the veteran population, resources and established programs that are complementary to longterm care facilities such as adult day care, assisted living, and other services, and funding sources that are available. The VSC believes that it should not take longer than a decade after the construction of a State Veterans Home in Northern Nevada for future investments in this area.

Recommendation 3. Require that the Veterans Services Commission and the Northern and Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery Advisory Committees provide an annual report to the Governor on activities, opportunities, and recommendations for legislative changes.

The duties for the VSC are listed above, and include advising NDVS and making recommendations to the Governor and Legislature for improvements. The duties of the members of the Northern and Southern Nevada Veteran Memorial Cemetery Advisory Committees are similarly limited as well. For instance, according the NRS 417.230, “the [NDVS] Director shall consult with each Committee regarding the establishment, maintenance and operation of the veterans’ cemetery for which the Committee was created.” While this consultation is valuable, generating a work product like an annual report of activities, opportunities, and proposed legislative changes would be of greater help.
The VSC, which includes members from both of the Northern and Southern Nevada Veteran Memorial Cemetery Advisory Committees, recommends that NRS 417.190 be changed to require and annual report and recommendations. As with this report, future reports should provide an overview of VSC activities, budget and policy recommendations for consideration by the Governor, Legislature, and Director and Deputy Director of NDVS. This report should be provided annually, and should coincide with other annual veteran-related reports.

**Recommendation 4. Require NDVS to provide an annual fiscal report to the veteran community.**

Currently, other policy reports recommend that all agencies serving veterans in the State of Nevada provide metrics to NDVS, which shall in turn provide an annual report on veteran statistics to the Governor and the Legislature. Another recommendation requires that NDVS provide an overview of legislative changes to the veteran community following every Legislative Session. This recommendation would require that NDVS include in either of these reports, as appropriate, a statewide funding analysis on veterans services in the State of Nevada.

The statewide funding analysis should be comprehensive and robust. It should include an overview of federal funding directed toward serving Nevada’s veterans as compared with similar states, much like the 2013 Green Zone Initiative Funding Analysis; it should include an overview of funding provided to veterans by other state agencies; it should examine how much revenue is generated through interment fees at the Northern and Southern Veteran Memorial Cemeteries, and how much of that revenue is used to serve veterans within Nevada and how much is diverted to the State’s General Fund; and most important, it should provide a comprehensive overview of the existing NDVS budgets. Much like the current annual report regarding the various NDVS gift accounts, this report should be due to the legislature in August of every year so that it can have the most significant impact on budgetary and policy development priority to legislative sessions.

This report should be used to identify what share of programmatic funding falls to the various agencies serving veterans in the State of Nevada. It should show the general fund expenditures versus the overall services provided, as well as the use of the License Plate Gift Account to enhance support for veterans through program support, pilot development, and other initiatives. It should also be used to make the case for future investments, reductions, or repurposing of state, federal, or private dollars directed to serving veterans in Nevada.

**Recommendation 5. The Nevada State Legislature should reintroduce and pass Senate Bill 174 from the 77th Session based on the version produced for its second reprinting.**

During the 77th Legislative Session, then-Senator Mark Hutchison and a bi-partisan group of supporters championed Senate Bill 174 (SB174). According to the second reprint of this bill, SB174 would authorize the Governor to require the naming of state buildings, parks, highways, or other property after deceased service members at the recommendation of the Veterans Services Commission. Although it was not a controversial bill, it still failed to pass.

The VSC recommends that this bill be reintroduced and considered during the 78th Legislative Session. Much like the requirement for an annual report, this would provide an important additional responsibility for the VSC. More important, it would allow Nevada’s fallen heroes to be honored in a significant and ongoing way.

**Recommendation 6. Continue Veterans Memorial Affairs and the Women Veterans Advisory Council as subcommittees of the VSC.**
During the 77th Legislative Session, Senator David Parks introduced Senate Bill 230 (SB230), which would authorize the construction of a Gold Star Memorial dedicated to Nevada’s fallen soldiers on the grounds of the Capitol. Since the passage of this bill, the VSC created the Veterans Memorial Affairs Subcommittee (VMAS) of the VSC made up with members of veteran service organizations and other pertinent state agencies to develop a design, location, and fundraising plan, while determining the criteria for placing the names of Nevada’s fallen soldiers on the memorial. Also, in March of 2014, Governor Sandoval signed Governor Sandoval signed Executive Order 2014-08, which created the Women Veterans Advisory Council (WVAC) and requiring the Council to develop a report with recommendations for improving outcomes for Nevada’s women veterans.

Both of these bodies have addressed important issues and completed necessary work for the improvement of services for Nevada’s service members, veterans, and their families. The VMAS has established the State’s criteria for recognition as a fallen Nevadan, for instance, and the WVAC has submitted its interim report and recommendations for consideration by the Governor and the Legislature ahead of the 78th Legislative Session. The VSC believes that both of these organizations should be supported and continued as VSC subcommittees so that their important work can continue to thrive.

Recommendation 7. NDVS should continue to pursue activities in support of reducing instances of suicide and homelessness among Nevada’s veteran population.

Over the last two years, NDVS and other state agencies have worked to address Nevada’s veteran suicide rate, and has achieved significant reductions. More recently, NDVS convened statewide service providers at all levels of government and community services to identify challenges and opportunities with respect to veteran homelessness in Nevada. The VSC highly encourages that these activities continue in 2015 so that improved outcomes can be attained.

Recommendation 8. NDVS should continue to pursue alternative solutions for resourcing the water needs of the Northern and Southern Nevada Veteran Memorial Cemeteries.

NDVS operates two Veteran Memorial Cemeteries in Fernley and Boulder City. Significant water resources are necessary in order for these cemeteries to continue to receive national recognition for providing the highest level of honor, dignity, and respect for Nevada’s fallen. The VSC recommends that NDVS continue to pursue alternative solutions for providing for and reducing the demand for these resources in the future.

Recommendation 9. NDVS should continue to pursue solutions for adequate Veteran Service Officer support in rural Nevada.

NDVS operates the statewide Veteran Advocacy and Support Team (VAST), which provides advocacy services for veterans seeking to file a disability claim against the federal Department of Veterans Affairs. In recent years, NDVS has developed two important innovations: first, the Rural Outreach for Veterans Enrichment and Resources (ROVER) Program, which provides traveling Veteran Services Officers to rural areas; and second, the Nevada Veteran Advocate Program, which provides training and certification for volunteer Veteran Services Officers. The VSC recommends that NDVS continue to pursue solutions to providing for providing adequate support for rural Nevada’s veterans as well.
Recommendation 10. The Nevada State Legislature should seek opportunities to support Veterans Court programs in the State’s judicial districts.

Assembly Bill 304 during the 77th Legislative Session called for an appropriation that would support the Veterans Court program already underway in Nevada’s 8th Judicial District. However, the bill did not pass. Recognizing the importance of veteran diversion court programs, and their effectiveness across the country, the VSC recommends that the Legislature continue to seek ways of supporting these court programs in the future.

Conclusion: The preceding report and recommendation aligns with the VSC’s duty to advise the Governor, Legislature, and the Director and Deputy Director of the Nevada Department of Veterans Services. The VSC believes that through reports such as this, it can continue to make important contributions to improving service to Nevada’s service members, veterans, and their families. It is in the pursuit of this goal that the VSC submits this report for consideration ahead of the next Legislative Session.
Appendix A: Member Biographies for the Veterans Services Commission

**Chairman Bill Baumann**—Bill Baumann represents the Disabled American Veterans on the Commission. He is originally from Des Moines, IA, and has lived in Nevada for nearly a decade. He has a broad and diverse educational background, including training in mediation and conflict management, FAA air traffic systems, defense contractor management, and marketing. He retired from the Air Force in 1971, where he served in both the aircraft maintenance and flight operations fields and completed his career as a Noncommissioned Officer In Charge of Training in 22 specialist career fields. He served in both Korea and Southeast Asia, where he was launch control NCOIC at U-Tapio, Thailand, and trained Ethiopian Air Force technicians in country during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Mr. Baumann is a Life Member of the Disabled American Veterans, and provides oversight to the day-to-day operations of the DAV Transportation System throughout the State of Nevada.

**Vice Chairman Michael Musgrove**—Michael Musgrove represents the Veterans of Foreign Wars on the Commission. He was born in San Diego, California, and is a 40-year resident of Nevada, currently residing in Spring Creek. He served in the United States Air Force from 1968 to 1976 and attended Clark County Community College and Great Basin College. Mr. Musgrove is a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, and the Military Order of the Cootie. He was reappointed to his second term on the Commission in January of 2010, and was elected Vice Chairman in January of 2011.

**The Honorable Pat Spearman**—Senator Pat Spearman represents District 1 in the Nevada State Senate. Prior to her service as an elected official, she joined United States Army after graduating from Norfolk State University in Virginia, serving for nearly three decades, including assignments in Europe, Korea, Panama, and at the Pentagon where she worked as a staff officer at the Army Operations Center. Pat also attended and graduated from the Army’s prestigious Command and General Staff College and eventually rising to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Prior to serving in the Nevada State Senate, Spearman was elected to a seat on the San Marcos (TX) Independent School District Board. Since being elected to the Senate, she has served as Chair of the Legislative Operations and Elections Committee, Vice-Chair of Government Affairs, and a member of the Transportation Committee. She has been responsible for moving several key pieces of legislation forward, including economic development, environmental protection for Lake Tahoe, veteran’s affairs, marriage equality, and improving health care delivery systems.

**The Honorable Elliot Anderson**—Assemblyman Anderson represents District 15 in Clark County in the Nevada State Assembly. He was born in Marshfield, Wisconsin, and is a UNLV Magna Cum Laude graduate with a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science. He served in the United States Marine Corps from 2001 to 2005 as a machine gunner, followed by three years in the inactive reserves. In 2004 he received a Good Conduct Medal from the USMC, and in 2005 he received a Combat Action Ribbon, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, and Global War on Terrorism Service Medal. He moved to Nevada in 2005 where he served as the Interim Chair of the Nevada Democratic Veterans and Military Families Caucus, helping to raise funds to send care packages to overseas service members. Anderson also served as the Nevada State Captain for VoteVets.org, working to empower and elect to office America’s veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. He worked for former Assemblywoman Kathy McClain prior to being elected to the Nevada Assembly.

**Ron Gutzman**—Ron Gutzman represents the American Legion on the Commission. Mr. Gutzman has lived in Nevada for over four decades, originally hailing from Madison, South Dakota. He attended university at Dakota State College, University of New Mexico, and Northern Arizona University. He is a
Marine Corps veteran and a former air traffic controller. In addition to serving on the Veterans Services Commission, he also sits on the National Executive Committee of the American Legion. Mr. Gutzman and his wife Beverly have two children, David and Kristina, and three grandchildren.

Charles “Chuck” Harton—Chuck Harton represents the Northern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery on the Commission. He was born in Oakland, California, and has made his home in Reno for nearly four decades. He retired from the United States Marine Corps as a First Sergeant with twenty-three years of service. He has served as national director of the Navy League of the United States and also president and director of the Reno Council of the Navy League. He is a member of the Marine Corps League and Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Sherry Rupert—Sherry Rupert represents the General Public on the Commission. She is the Executive Director of the State of Nevada Indian Commission, appointed by Governor Guinn September of 2005. With over 20 years of tribal, public and private business experience, she possesses a strong background in accounting, finance, business administration, tribal tourism, and Indian Affairs. Mrs. Rupert is a graduate of the University of Nevada, Reno, with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration and is past President of the Native American Chapter of the University of Nevada, Reno Alumni Association. She has presented at numerous tribal, state, regional and national conferences and served two terms as President of the Governors’ Interstate Indian Council, and was formerly the Treasurer for two terms. The Governors’ Interstate Indian Council is a national organization promoting and protecting the various interests, welfare and well-being of American Indian people of the United States and in particular those American Indian residents within the various participating states of the Governors’ Interstate Indian Council. Sherry is an American Indian of Paiute and Washoe heritage. She is also a proud Native Nevadan, born in Carson City and raised on the Washoe Reservation in Gardnerville, Nevada. Now residing in Carson City, she is a wife and mother of two, with her eldest son proudly serving in the United States Navy.

Felicia Tate—Felicia Tate represents the Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery on the Commission. As a native of Los Angeles, California, she graduated from George Washington Preparatory High School in June 1992. She joined the Navy at the Naval and Marine Corps Reserve Center located at Naval Station Long Beach on August 30, 2001 and reported to Recruit Training Command, Great Lakes, Chicago, Illinois for Non Prior Service Accession Training on April 04, 2002. Upon completion of Boot Camp and Accession Training, she returned to the Reserve Center where she remained a drilling reservist until her move to Las Vegas in June 2003. After affiliating with the Reserve Center located at Nellis Air Force Base, Las Vegas, Nevada, she was assigned to the Naval Coastal Warfare Group One, Detachment Delta unit. This assignment led to her being asked to provide administrative support for their 34th Squadron, which was comprised of the Mobile Inshore Undersea Warfare and Inshore Boat Unit’s. Tate has been awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (fifth award), Good Conduct, Naval Reserve Meritorious Medal (second award), Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal (with “M” Device), Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal, and the Navy Expert Rifleman Medal.

Sally Wiley—Sally Wiley represents the General Public on the Commission. She was born in Winnemucca and has lived in Gardnerville since 2001. She attended Merritt Junior College in Oakland, California, and retired from the investment industry. Mrs. Wiley is a member of Carson Valley SERTOMA, Douglas County Republican Women, the Douglas County Republican Central Committee, Gold Star Mothers of America, Sierra Nevada Blue Star Mothers, and St. Gall Catholic Church. She also volunteers for the Army National Guard, Carson Valley Food Closet, St. Gall Women’s Society, and St. Gall Catholic
Church. She is married to James Wiley and is the mother of three sons, Sean Diamond, who was killed by an improvised explosive device while serving his third tour in Iraq in February 2009, Michael Diamond, and Jason Diamond.
Governor Sandoval’s Legislative Agenda for the 78th Legislative Session

Bill Draft Request 295: Makes various changes to encourage employment of veterans and their spouses in Nevada.
- Requires the Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation to gather and report aggregate unemployment data for veterans, to include Unemployment Insurance usage, to the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs on a monthly basis.
- Requires the Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation to gather and report aggregate unemployment data for veterans, to include Unemployment Insurance usage, to the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs on a monthly basis.
- Authorizes private sector employers to prefer veterans and their spouses in hiring.
- Provides a general requirement for state licensing boards and bodies to develop licensure reciprocity opportunities for service members, veterans, and their families holding licenses that are not currently recognized by the State of Nevada.
- Requires the relevant state licensure and certification boards and commissions to submit a report annually to the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs regarding the number of veterans applying for and receiving licensure or certification issuance or renewal if they have collected it through the application process.

Bill Draft Request 296: Makes various changes relating to veteran education.
- Requires the Nevada Department of Education to share aggregate data of military-dependent children with the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs annually.
- Extends the provision of free Higher Education tuition beyond the two-year period created by AB 260 in the 77th Legislative Session (2013).
- Requires the Nevada System of Higher Education to gather and share pertinent data with the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs.

Bill Draft Request 297: Revises provisions governing various benefits for veterans.
- Creates a Survivors’ Tax Exemption that mirrors the exemption provided to deployed members of the Nevada National Guard.
- Provides a payroll tax exemption for employers who hire unemployed veterans.
- Considers “Individual Unemployability” the same as 100% Disability for State Purposes.

Bill Draft Request 298: Requires collection, tracking, sharing and reporting of information related to veterans.
- Creates Veterans and Military Day at the Legislature.
- Creates Veterans Remains Officers at the County level.
- Provides for the naming of state buildings and property after fallen Nevada veterans.
- Revises provisions relating to preferences in state purchasing for businesses owned by a veteran with a service-connected disability.
- Allows for a xeriscaping option at veterans cemeteries.
- Requires NDVS to provide the statewide veteran community detailed legislative update following each full legislative session.
• Requires the state agencies serving veterans listed in Executive Order 2014-20 to provide the information listed in the order in an annual report to the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs.
Other Veteran and Military Bills for the 78th Legislative Session
As of December 15, 2014

1. BILL DRAFT REQUEST 43-22 (Assemblyman Oscarson): Provides for issuance of special license plates for veterans who are awarded the Silver Star or Bronze Star Medal.
2. BILL DRAFT REQUEST 43-71 (Senator Manendo): Authorizes a nonresident on active duty in the Armed Forces in Nevada to enroll in the Program for Education of Motorcycle Riders.
3. BILL DRAFT REQUEST 43-106 (Assemblyman Duncan): Revises provisions governing the designation of veteran status on drivers’ licenses.
4. BILL DRAFT REQUEST 114 (Senate Committee on Legislative Operations and Elections): Makes various changes relating to overseas voting by veterans.
5. BILL DRAFT REQUEST 143 (Senators Smith, Spearman): Revises provisions relating to reciprocity of professional licenses for certain active members of the military.
7. BILL DRAFT REQUEST 202 (Assemblyman Elliot Anderson, Senator Spearman): ACR: Honors Nevadans who have lost their lives in the Global War on Terrorism.
8. BILL DRAFT REQUEST 15-254 (Assemblyman Daly): Revises provisions governing current and former military servicemen and servicewomen.
9. BILL DRAFT REQUEST 36-338 (Office of the Military): Provides persons who are subject to the Nevada Code of Military Justice the right to request a court-martial in lieu of nonjudicial punishment.
11. BILL DRAFT REQUEST 539 (Assemblyman Elliot Anderson): Revises provisions governing certain services for veterans.
12. BILL DRAFT REQUEST 579 (Assemblyman Edwards): Provides enhanced support services for veterans.
13. BILL DRAFT REQUEST 624 (Assemblyman O’Neill): Revises provisions governing the Department of Motor Vehicles and registration under the Selective Service System.
NORTHERN NEVADA VETERANS HOME NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Nevada Department of Veterans Services
6880 S. McCarran Blvd, Suite #2
Reno, NV 89509
775-688-1653
www.veterans.nv.gov
Northern Nevada Veterans Home Needs Assessment

Executive Summary

State veterans homes fill an important need for veterans with low income and veterans who desire to spend their last years with a sense of camaraderie sharing living arrangements with other veterans, in fact, many surveys indicate that veterans living in state veterans homes refer to this amenity as one of the most important available to them - respondents almost always refer to this sense of camaraderie - a band of brotherhood, as one of the most significant benefits to being cared for in a state veterans home.\(^\text{16}\)

The predominant service offered in veterans nursing homes is nursing home care. Nursing homes authorized by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) must be licensed for their particular state and conform to skilled or intermediate nursing services offered in private sector nursing homes. Veterans homes may also offer assisted living or domiciliary care that is a form of supported independent living.

Statistically, private sector nursing homes are mostly populated by older women who are generally in poor health. According to the Senior Veterans Service Alliance, some men may not feel comfortable in an environment where the activities and the social atmosphere are centered around the needs and desires of women. In contrast, state veterans homes are almost exclusively populated by men that are younger and healthier than that of private sector facilities.\(^\text{17}\) State veterans homes that accept federal grant assistance for the construction of a veterans’ home require that at least 75 percent of facility occupants be veterans. The remaining 25 percent of occupants at any one time may be veteran-related family members, i.e., spouses, surviving spouses, and/or Gold Star parents who are not entitled to payment of VA aid.

Every state in the nation has at least one veterans home and most states have multiple, sometimes as many as six or seven. At present, the state of Nevada has one designated veterans home which is located in Boulder City, Nevada, approximately 30 miles southeast of the greater Las Vegas valley. There is significant demand for the services of these homes nationwide but lack of federal and state funding has created a backlog of over 130 homes that are waiting to be built, including the proposed Northern Nevada Veterans Home, which is the subject of this report.

During the 2013 Nevada Legislative Session, Governor Sandoval signed Assembly Bill 505, which appropriated funding for the design phase of a Northern Nevada Veterans Home. The design is currently underway, and the state will be pursuing construction funding from the state and federal government during the 2015 legislative session. The preliminary design for the Northern Nevada Veterans Home is built to accommodate a 96-bed facility, at a projected total cost of approximately $47 million. More than 51,000 veterans reside in the greater Northern Nevada counties of Washoe, Carson City, Lyon, and Churchill, and nearly half of these veterans are currently aged 65 and over. As Nevada’s only state veterans home is located more than 450 miles away, many veterans living in Northern Nevada are forced to go to neighboring states to obtain long-term veterans care.

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\(^{16}\) Senior Veterans Service Alliance, available at [http://www.veteransaidbenefit.org/state_veterans_nursing_homes.htm](http://www.veteransaidbenefit.org/state_veterans_nursing_homes.htm), last accessed April 2014

\(^{17}\) Senior Veterans Service Alliance, available at [http://www.veteransaidbenefit.org/state_veterans_nursing_homes.htm](http://www.veteransaidbenefit.org/state_veterans_nursing_homes.htm), last accessed April 2014
Veterans will often go out of their way to obtain long-term care in a state veterans home as opposed to a private facility due to a higher level quality of care. For instance, in 2009, more than 1 in 4 (27.1 percent) of Nevada nursing homes were found to have deficiencies severe enough to lead to actual harm or place residents in jeopardy.\textsuperscript{18} The Nevada State Veterans Home in Boulder City is a four star overall rated facility.\textsuperscript{19} The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services places it among the better 60–80 percent of nursing homes in Nevada.

In a recent statewide survey of Nevada veterans, 47 percent of respondents indicated that additional nursing home beds are needed in Northern Nevada. It is important to note that 40 percent of survey respondents also indicated additional nursing home beds were desired in Southern Nevada as well, however, Nevada Revised Statute (NRS) 417.147, clearly states that “if an additional veterans’ home is authorized, it must be established in northern Nevada.”\textsuperscript{20} This legislation was added during the 2001 legislative session prior to the opening of the Nevada State Veterans Home in Boulder City.

Governor Sandoval and his administration have worked hard in recent years to identify and prioritize needs and build collaborative solutions to increase the delivery of services, benefits, opportunities, and resources to Nevada veterans. The cornerstone of this effort to date has been the Green Zone Initiative, a unique systems change model that has established an architecture to improve service delivery, the policy development process, and the state’s ability to reach its veterans. In fact, Governor Sandoval issued a proclamation declaring 2014 as \textit{The Year of the Veteran} in Nevada.

The state of Nevada has a shortage of long-term care housing options specific to veterans needs. Demographic needs in the state demonstrate significant support for the construction of an additional veterans home. It is also a smart financial investment - when a state veterans home is constructed, 2/3 of the funding is covered by the federal government. The remaining 1/3 of funding is required to be matched by the state. Nevada’s application for the construction of a Northern Nevada Veterans Home was submitted in 2007. This application stands ready to be approved once matching funds are authorized by the Nevada Legislature.

Nevada’s veterans have demonstrated a considerable commitment in their service to our country, and they deserve a state-of-the-art skilled nursing facility that they can truly call “home,” a place where they can live with other patriots with whom they share a common identity and sense of community.

**Demographic Overview**

Americans are living and working longer, and as a result, roughly 70 percent of adults will need long-term care services at some point in their life.\textsuperscript{21} The number of Americans who need long-term care is expected to increase from approximately 12 million today to 27 million in 2050. By 2030, when the last baby boomers are turning 65, the number of Americans 65 and older is projected to be about 19 percent of the total U.S. population.\textsuperscript{22} Of Nevada’s approximately 2.7 million residents, 12.6 percent of the current population is aged 65 and older.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{18} Sanford Center for Aging, Division of Health Sciences, University of Nevada, Reno, Elders Count Nevada, 2013
\textsuperscript{20} Nevada Revised Statutes, Chapter 417 – Veterans’ Services, available at \url{http://www.leg.state.nv.us/NRS/NRS-417.html#NRS417Sec147}, last accessed April 2014
\textsuperscript{23} Nevada State Office of Rural Health, Nevada Rural and Frontier Data Book, 2013 edition
Federal census data currently shows that Nevada has approximately 226,000 veterans, however, due to several significant factors, the Nevada Department of Veterans Services believes the state’s veteran population is closer to 300,000. According to the federal census data, nearly 70 percent of the state’s population, including the total veteran population, resides in Clark County, a substantial number of veterans reside in Northern Nevada. More than 51,000 veterans, or approximately 23 percent of Nevada veterans, reside in the counties of Washoe, Carson City, Lyon, and Churchill (those that are within an hours’ drive of the greater Reno metropolitan statistical area). Forty-four percent of veterans residing in Northern Nevada are aged 65 and over. An estimated 10 percent of Nevada veterans reside in the frontier regions of the state.

Nevada Veterans by County of Residence and Age Range

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</table>
While it is abundantly clear from the data above that there is a significant number of Nevada veterans who would be eligible for the proposed Northern Nevada Veterans Home, there is also a clear shortage of long-term care options designed specifically for veterans, especially when compared to other states across the country. At present, Nevada has 180 nursing home beds available to a population of nearly 95,000 Nevada veterans aged 65 and older. This equates to roughly 529 veterans for each bed that is available, which is a high number on its own and is also much higher than the majority of states across the country. The national average is 337 veterans for each available bed.

Source: United States Department of Veterans Affairs, National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics

State by State Comparison, Available Beds per Veteran Aged 65 and Older

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>No. of Veterans Home Beds</th>
<th>Veterans Population</th>
<th>Veteran Population (65 and older)</th>
<th>Percent of Veterans 65 and older</th>
<th>Vets per Bed (65 and older)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>704</td>
<td>424,013</td>
<td>174,341</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>74,010</td>
<td>18,628</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>541,120</td>
<td>235,489</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>256,665</td>
<td>110,177</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>1,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>2771</td>
<td>1,942,775</td>
<td>779,941</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>No. of Veterans Home Beds</td>
<td>Veterans Population</td>
<td>Veteran Population (65 and older)</td>
<td>Percent of Veterans 65 and older</td>
<td>Vets per Bed (65 and older)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>405,244</td>
<td>154,699</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>230,542</td>
<td>110,869</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>79,967</td>
<td>35,933</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District of Columbia</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>33,070</td>
<td>13,352</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>1,588,029</td>
<td>701,910</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>778,282</td>
<td>286,973</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>506</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>116,539</td>
<td>42,607</td>
<td>37%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>138,546</td>
<td>54,925</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
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<td>803,964</td>
<td>360,596</td>
<td>45%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>516,673</td>
<td>218,274</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>1,108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>247,587</td>
<td>112,930</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>233,342</td>
<td>97,810</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>348,089</td>
<td>147,152</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>326,454</td>
<td>135,192</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>135,118</td>
<td>60,085</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>464,207</td>
<td>170,194</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>416,443</td>
<td>198,616</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>634</td>
<td>719,393</td>
<td>336,752</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>882</td>
<td>386,598</td>
<td>170,870</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>230,794</td>
<td>92,286</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>1350</td>
<td>521,526</td>
<td>228,131</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>103,590</td>
<td>44,461</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>145,399</td>
<td>61,823</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>233,302</td>
<td>95,211</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>117,554</td>
<td>50,956</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>968</td>
<td>475,870</td>
<td>232,298</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>174,470</td>
<td>69,883</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>1220</td>
<td>983,844</td>
<td>448,221</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>776,683</td>
<td>317,255</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>56,696</td>
<td>22,103</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>943,046</td>
<td>420,513</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>1433</td>
<td>347,374</td>
<td>145,068</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>339,891</td>
<td>155,061</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>1,027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>1666</td>
<td>1,035,566</td>
<td>495,305</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>75,968</td>
<td>35,231</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>422,297</td>
<td>173,579</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>76,320</td>
<td>31,671</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>533,803</td>
<td>229,969</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>1173</td>
<td>1,689,759</td>
<td>648,379</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>No. of Veterans Home Beds</td>
<td>Veterans Population</td>
<td>Veteran Population (65 and older)</td>
<td>Percent of Veterans 65 and older</td>
<td>Vets per Bed (65 and older)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>153,901</td>
<td>62,696</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>52,090</td>
<td>23,583</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>827,810</td>
<td>265,310</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>617,225</td>
<td>237,353</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>179,623</td>
<td>80,240</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>951</td>
<td>436,630</td>
<td>199,874</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>55,912</td>
<td>20,633</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total / Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>28,527</strong></td>
<td><strong>22,813,614</strong></td>
<td><strong>9,615,408</strong></td>
<td><strong>42%</strong></td>
<td><strong>337</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, Nevada is the seventh largest state in the country in terms of landmass, spanning more than 110,000 square miles. A state of this size needs more than one veterans home available to its veterans, and most states of similar sizes do have more than one home available for its residents.

**Veterans Homes Comparison, Top Ten Largest States by Land Mass**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Total Square Miles</th>
<th>No. of Veterans Homes</th>
<th>No. of Veterans Home Beds</th>
<th>Vets per Bed (65 and older)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>656,424</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>268,601</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1,173</td>
<td>553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>163,707</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2,771</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>147,046</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>121,598</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>114,006</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>110,567</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>104,100</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>98,386</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>1,027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>97,818</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Eligibility and Application Requirements for State Veterans Homes**

Facilities vary in their eligibility rules from state to state. And even in the same state it is common, where there is more than one state home, for some homes to have very stringent eligibility rules and others to be more lenient. These differences are probably based on the demand for care and the available beds in that particular geographic area.

Some homes require the veteran to be totally disabled and unable to earn an income. Some evaluate on the basis of medical need or age. Some evaluate entirely on income - meaning applicants above a certain level will not be accepted. Some accept only former active-duty veterans, while others accept all who were in the military whether active duty or reserve. Still others accept only veterans who served during a period of war. Some homes accept the spouses or surviving spouses of veterans and

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24 Senior Veterans Service Alliance, available at [http://www.veteransaidbenefit.org/state_veterans_nursing_homes.htm](http://www.veteransaidbenefit.org/state_veterans_nursing_homes.htm), last accessed April 2014
some will accept the parents of veterans but restrict that to the parents of veterans who died while in service (Gold Star parents). Federal regulations allow that 25 percent of the bed occupants at any one time may be veteran-related family members, i.e., spouses, surviving spouses, and/or gold star parents who are not entitled to payment of VA aid. When a State Home accepts grant assistance for a construction project, 75 percent of the bed occupants at the facility must be veterans.

Residency requirements vary from state to state. The most stringent seems to be a three-year prior residency in the state whereas other homes may only require 90 days of residency. All states require an application process to get into a home. Typically a committee or board will approve or disapprove each application.

_Nevada State Veterans Home, Boulder City, Nevada_

Nevada’s first federally funded state operated veterans nursing home was approved in 1999 and opened on August 12, 2002. The facility cost approximately $14 million in 2002 dollars. Within the 82,000 square foot facility, the home is able to accommodate 180 residents throughout three neighborhoods, including one neighborhood offering two levels of secured care for those suffering from Alzheimer’s or other dementia related illnesses. The other two neighborhoods are devoted to basic long-term nursing care.

The Southern Nevada facility is already at capacity and arguably could use additional beds as it maintains an average 90 percent occupancy rate and has required a waitlist for admission since 2013. Current residents include 127 male veterans, 40 spouses (all women), and 12 women veterans. The average age of residents is 84 years old, and 99 percent of residents are from a 50 mile radius of Clark County. The home became general fund independent for the first time in 2011, less than 10 years after opening.

Many veterans service organizations, civic groups, and church groups sponsor numerous activities for residents, including movies, games, dance parties, bingo, picnics, and other activities and programs for the general well-being of residents. At any one time the Southern Nevada facility has approximately 95-130 volunteers facilitating events and activities for residents. During the 2013 calendar year, volunteers provided 12,102 hours of time.

_Proposed Northern Nevada Veterans Home_

During the 2013 Legislative Session, Governor Sandoval signed Assembly Bill 505, which appropriated funding for the design through construction documents phase for a Northern Nevada Veterans Home. This design will tell us exactly how much money Nevada will need to seek for construction in the 2015 legislative session. Nevada has already submitted a grant application with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs that would cover two-thirds of the cost of the proposed home, with the state of Nevada funding the remaining one third of the costs. A preliminary construction cost of $27 million is estimated. If approved, construction could occur as early as January 2016, but more likely in 2017.

The concept calls for a 96 bed facility, providing 24-hour skilled nursing care to veterans and their spouses. The campus would create a residential atmosphere with small community groupings. When searching for potential sites, the following criteria were considered;

- the home must serve the greatest number of veterans possible,
- be close to a VA Hospital to minimize stress associated with travel to medical appointments,
- be close to recreational activities,
- be close to the homes of family and friends, and;

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Nevada State Veterans Home, April 2014
• have a strong local community support base.

With these criteria in mind, in consideration is a location at the Northern end of the Northern Nevada Mental Health Campus in Reno, bordered by Kietzke Lane and Galletti Way. Site locations in Carson City were considered as well, however, the need to place the facility in proximity of a VA Hospital to best support medical needs became an overriding factor.

The VA Hospital’s Community Living Center (CLC) in Reno is a 60-bed facility that is currently serving Northern Nevada as a veterans nursing home and community living center. The facility typically houses 30 or so long-term care vets. The remaining 30 beds are used for short-term rehabilitation or hospice needs. At present, the CLC faces significant challenges providing long-term care to veterans after they have been discharged from the VA Hospital. The proposed Northern Nevada Veterans Home would allow the CLC to concentrate more fully on short-term rehabilitation needs. Currently, the VA has contracts with Rosewood and Regent, two nursing homes in the area, where the VA is supervising and monitoring the services they provide. The priority is to keep veterans in-state, however, oftentimes veterans requiring long-term care are sent to Las Vegas and California due to lack of beds in the north.

Local veterans are encouraged about the proposed Northern Nevada Veterans Home, but also hope that expansion opportunities will be built into the design to accommodate future needs.

**Green House Concept**

The proposed Northern Nevada Veterans Home will be based on the model designed by the Green House Project, an initiative funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Until recently, long-term care meant placement in an institution such as a nursing home. Most Americans do not want to live in traditional nursing homes; they want to remain in their own homes. If and when they cannot live independently, they want options that look and feel more like home. The “culture change” movement is transforming long-term care by promoting more home-like facilities and providing more options for consumers to receive care how and where they want it, in their communities.

The VA is leading this transformation as well, as it will no longer fund traditional institutional nursing homes, and is instead funding the development of Green House (cluster) Concepts. The proposed Northern Nevada Veterans Home will include pods of 12 residents each with individual rooms.

A Green House home is a self-contained home for six to 10 people (12 people with a financial exception) located in clusters of 1 to 24 homes and designed to be similar to the homes or apartment building in the surrounding community. Green House home clusters are typically licensed as skilled nursing homes and meet all applicable federal and state regulatory requirements.

Each person who lives in a Green House home has a private bedroom and full bathroom opening to a central living area, open full kitchen and dining room. Elders share meals prepared in the home at a common table. Family members, friends, and staff are welcome to join the community at mealtimes and other activities.

Homes are staffed by a team of universal workers. All staff meet certification and educational requirements as required for their roles—e.g., certified nursing assistants (CNAs), nurses—and receive extensive additional training in The Green House principles, practices, necessary role skills, and the skills required to operate in and with self-managed teams. Nurses serve each Green House home on a 24-hour basis. One nurse typically covers two homes during the day and evening and up to three homes at night. The other clinical professionals on the team visit the houses regularly and as individual residents require.

Compared to traditional nursing home residents, Green House elders are healthier, happier, and more active. In addition, the Green House model costs the same to operate as traditional nursing homes. As of May 2012, the National Green House Replication Initiative is active in 32 states with 144 homes open and 120 homes in development. Evaluations conducted between 2003 and 2012 examined
numerous measures of care, satisfaction, and financial performance, indicating the following key findings:

**Green House elders relative to comparison group of nursing home residents**

- **Improved quality of life:** Green House elders reported improvement in seven domains of quality of life (privacy, dignity, meaningful activity, relationship, autonomy, food enjoyment, and individuality) and emotional well-being.
- **Improved quality of care:** Green House elders maintained self-care abilities longer with fewer experiencing decline in late-loss Activities of Daily Living. Fewer Green House elders experienced depression, being bedfast and having little or no activity.
- **Improved family satisfaction:** Green House families were more satisfied with general amenities, meals, housekeeping, physical environment, privacy, autonomy, and health care.
- **Improved staff satisfaction:** Green House staff reported higher job satisfaction and increased likelihood of remaining in their jobs.

**Green House homes relative to nursing home comparison sites**

- **Higher direct care time:** 23–31 minutes more per resident per day in staff time spent on direct care activities in Green House homes without increasing overall staff time.
- **Increased engagement with elders:** More than a four-fold increase in staff time spent engaging with elders (outside of direct care activities) in Green House settings.
- **Less stress:** Direct care staff in Green House homes reported less job-related stress.
- **Improved care outcome:** Fewer in-house acquired pressure ulcers in Green House homes.

**Green House homes versus traditional and other culture change nursing home costs**

- **Cost neutral operations:** Green House homes operate at the same median cost as the national nursing home median cost.
- **Lower capital costs:** Green House homes provide private bedrooms and baths and enhanced common space while building the same or fewer square feet than other current culture change nursing home models. Lower square foot costs lead to lower capital costs.

**Role of direct-care workers**

- **Comparable quality:** Removal of formal nurse supervision of direct care workers did not compromise care quality.
- **Timely intervention:** High level of direct care worker familiarity with elders led to very early identification of changes in condition, facilitating timely intervention.

The Green House model is the future of care and the Northern Nevada Veterans Home will be on the forefront of this culture change.

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27 Ibid
28 Ibid
29 Ibid
Community Convenings

To ensure that a future facility meets the needs of veterans in Northern Nevada, Caleb Cage, Director of Military and Veterans Policy within the Office of the Governor, held two public convenings in January 2014 to solicit public input regarding specific nursing home needs. Nearly 40 veterans, family members, and community members from Reno and Carson City attended the two convenings.

The largest and most persistent concern vocalized by veterans pertained to the proposed size of the facility. Veterans would like a larger facility, and expressed considerable concern about the upcoming wave of an aging population. Veterans observed that the rate of growth at the VA Hospital has been significant and that 96 beds would be insufficient to meet demand. Veterans also expressed concern about the demands of two rapidly surging populations with arguably different needs – aging seniors, and newly returned veterans with war-related disabilities. Veterans recommended that the facility be built with an eye towards inevitable expansion.

Veterans also commented on the ability to care for veterans with Alzheimer’s. From 2000 to 2010, the incidence of Alzheimer’s among Nevada adults 65 and older rose by 38 percent, compared to 12 percent nationwide. Veterans with dementia or Alzheimer’s disease require extra levels of care that other patients don’t, and the Nevada veterans that attended the community convenings expressed their concern for this element of care.

Location was somewhat of a concern, with some veterans hoping that the proposed site would be located in Carson City. A few veterans indicated traveling to Reno was cumbersome, however, the VA has been very clear that newly constructed veterans home can be no more than 45 minutes or miles away from a VA Hospital. The purpose of this is twofold, (1) geographic proximity to medical VA facilities is important so that residents can receive timely medical treatment and (2) the VA is proactively trying to make VA Hospitals teaching institutions nationwide.

Service providers in attendance, or veterans who also volunteer in various veteran related organizations indicated a strong desire to assist the local veterans community. They welcomed the proposed Northern Nevada Veterans Home as a new location to convene together to share ideas, connect with other veterans, and provide a sense of community and belonging to the future residents of the home. A community center or place within the veterans home where organizations could hold meetings would be a welcome addition to the proposed project.

Conclusion

This needs assessment has gathered data from various sources to determine whether or not there is a need for the construction of a Northern Nevada Veterans Home. It has also examined existing national systems and contemporary best practices to determine the best possible course of action for going forward. In doing so, it has found that there is clearly a need for such a Veterans Home in Northern Nevada, and also suggests that expansion opportunities for Southern Nevada should be pursued and considered as well.

Again, this need is based on data. Not only does Nevada’s veteran population in northern Nevada support such a home, but Nevada’s standing with respect to the number of available nursing home beds for veterans as compared to other large states also reinforces this argument. As this report points out, this need is only going to grow in the future as current generations age and later require long-term care services.

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30 Sanford Center for Aging, Division of Health Sciences, University of Nevada, Reno, Elders Count Nevada, 2013
Beyond the hard data provided in this report, this need is also reinforced by anecdotal information. The researchers provided multiple opportunities for public input on this process, particularly from the veteran population, either through online surveys or public convenings. In every case the veteran community showed a high interest in this need.

There are many good reasons for the high priority the veteran community places on this issue. Veterans living in veteran homes report a higher quality of life and quality of care, a fact that has been repeatedly shown through Nevada’s existing nursing home in Boulder City. Such facilities also provide key locations for existing service organizations, such as the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, and others, to focus the attention of their outreach, community building, and volunteerism efforts.

The Nevada Department of Veterans Services and the State Public Works Division have begun work toward the completion of this home to date. Governor Sandoval advocated for and signed Assembly Bill 505 during the 77th Legislative Session; the Nevada Department of Veterans Services and the State Public Works Division has begun work with architects on the design phase; site selection is complete; the federal matching grant application has been submitted; and more. It is because of this progress and the need clearly outlined in this report that we make the following recommendations.

**Recommendations:**
- The State of Nevada should continue to pursue the construction of the Northern Nevada Veterans Home in the next Legislative Session.
- The State should also continue to pursue a statewide needs assessment for housing needs for veterans in Southern and rural Nevada.

**About the Author**
Strategic Progress, LLC is a Nevada based company specializing in regional planning, public policy research and advocacy, federal grant development, fundraising and strategic positioning of large scale initiatives.

Cyndy Ortiz Gustafson, Strategic Progress founder and CEO, has a MA in Political Science and Public Law from Washington State University, and over 10 years of leadership experience at the federal and state levels conducting policy research, building coalitions, designing communication strategies and issues management plans, and strategically positioning large-scale public policy initiatives. She directed the research and writing of this project.

The lead research consultant and writer on this project is Jennifer Ouellette. Ms. Ouellette has an MS in Accounting from the University of Southern California, and has worked for a variety of research and analytics firms such as Applied Analysis, PricewaterhouseCoopers, and Econ One Research. She has partnered with Strategic Progress on several statewide public policy research projects, and presented those findings to various groups and entities across Nevada.
NEVADA VETERANS ASSISTIVE CARE AND SENIOR HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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Project Scope & Methodology

The primary goals of this housing needs assessment are to:
1) Clarify current and anticipated service and housing related needs for senior veterans;
2) Project the number of potential veterans that will require these services over the next 10 to 20 years and;
3) Recommend ways to redirect existing resources to improve the health and quality of life of Nevada’s senior veteran population and their families.

The Nevada Department of Veterans Services hired Strategic Progress to gain an improved understanding of the assistive care and housing needs of senior Nevada veterans and their spouses in the three distinct geographic areas of Nevada, including Northern Nevada, Southern Nevada, and the rural and frontier areas of the state.

The state of Nevada is committed to the goal of providing an exemplary level of service and care for Nevada’s veteran population across all demographic and service spectrums. For the purposes of this specific assistive care and housing needs assessment, Strategic Progress and the Nevada Department of Veterans Services have focused on veterans aged 50 and over, as well as those that are currently using or concerned about the possibility of needing care from adult daycare facilitates, assisted living facilities, and skilled nursing facilities. We define “senior” as over age 65 but recognize that veterans age 50 and over are beginning to look at retirement and health care needs into the future, and therefore, we interviewed and surveyed younger veterans as well.

Key Findings

The veterans and providers of senior housing services across Nevada that we surveyed and interviewed, while representing only a snapshot of perspectives and viewpoints, provided insight to the Nevada Department of Veterans Services on a number of issues.

- They shared a perception that it is extremely difficult to access veteran benefits and navigate the VA system, as well as navigate the community based service system.
- Veterans experienced difficulties understanding what benefits were available to them, what services they could access with those benefits in addition to their private benefits and funding, and how they could apply for those services, if they were eligible.
- Quality health and housing services for senior veterans are being accessed by this population through a variety of providers largely outside of the VA. Education and support to those providers is critical, and collaborations must be built to advance health and wellness outcomes for veterans living in private facilities across Nevada.
- Training of staff in senior care facilities caring for veterans is a critical issue, particularly
for a population that has higher than average mental health issues,\textsuperscript{31} including PTSD, which can result in behavioral challenges for untrained nursing staff.

- Increased mental health services are needed to meet the unique needs of senior veterans in long term care.
- Veterans and providers of services stated that having a Veteran Services Officer at senior care facilities is a benefit to the veteran in terms of providing information and support to veteran clients.
- The quality of life for veterans in the State Veteran Home was perceived to be different, and better, for most interviewees due to the fact that they had access to peers, increased funding, and increased supports.

**NATIONAL OVERVIEW ON SENIOR HOUSING NEEDS**

According to the Administration on Aging, older adults (aged 65+) numbered 43.1 million in 2012, an increase of 7.6 million or 21% in the last ten years.\textsuperscript{32} Once an adult reaches the age of 65, he or she can expect an average life expectancy of an additional 19.2 years (20.4 years for females and 17.8 years for males). While it varies by state, nationwide, about one in every seven adults, or 13.7%, of the population is over the age of 65.\textsuperscript{33}

Furthermore, the number of Americans aged 45 to 64 that are expected to reach 65 over the next two decades is experiencing unprecedented increases as well. In 2050, the number of Americans aged 65 and older is projected to be 88.5 million, more than double the 43.1 million estimate from 2012 referenced earlier.\textsuperscript{34} The “baby boomers” are largely responsible for this increase in the older population, as they began turning 65 in 2011.

The growth in the aging population will present challenges to policy makers, caretakers, and programs, such as Social Security and Medicare. Families, businesses, and healthcare providers will be overwhelmed as well, as they struggle to meet growing service demands.

**Factors Impacting an Aging Population**

Affordable, accessible, and well-located housing is central to quality of life for people of all ages, especially for older adults (defined throughout this report as adults 50 and over). As the single largest item in most household budgets, housing costs directly affect day-to-day financial


\textsuperscript{34} United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging, available at http://www.aoa.acl.gov/Aging_Statistics/Profile/2013/2.aspx, last accessed November 2014
security as well as the ability to accrue wealth to draw upon later in life. Accessibility is essential to older adults’ health and safety as physical and cognitive limitations increase. Proximity of housing to stores, services, and transportation enables older adults to remain active and productive members of their communities, meet their own basic needs, and maintain social connections. And for those with chronic conditions and disabilities, the availability of housing with supports and services determines the quality and cost of long-term care—particularly the portion paid with public funds.

High housing costs force millions of low-income older adults to sacrifice spending on other necessities, including food, undermining their health and wellbeing. Much of the nation’s housing inventory lacks basic accessibility features, preventing older adults with disabilities from living safely and comfortably in their homes. The nation’s transportation and pedestrian infrastructure is generally ill suited for those who cannot or choose not to drive, isolating older adults from friends and family. Disconnects between housing programs and the health care system put many older adults with disabilities or long-term care needs at risk of premature institutionalization. Unfortunately, the nation’s existing housing inventory is unprepared to meet the escalating need for affordability, accessibility, social connectivity, and supportive services.

Long-term services and supports are essential to improve the lives of seniors and their family caregivers. Most seniors do not live in institutions such as nursing facilities; in fact, most aging adults live in their own home, and receive long-term services and supports at home or in their community. There are a wide variety of home and community-based services and supports that can enable people to live as independently as possible. These include personal care, where an aide can help with daily activities; assisted living, which is licensed, supportive group housing usually including meals and assistance with daily activities for people who would otherwise not be able to live in their own homes; adult day services provided in a senior center or other group setting, and many others.

A national study by conducted by AARP found the following key findings regarding the common factors facing an aging population:

1. The age 85 and older population—the age group most likely to need long-term services and supports—is growing at a dramatic rate. A better barometer for the potential demand for long-term services and supports (LTSS) is the growth in the population aged 85 and older, which is expected to increase by 69 percent between 2012 and 2032 and more than triple (+224 percent) between 2012 and 2050. People age 85 or older not only have much higher rates of disability, but they are also much more likely to be widowed and without someone to provide assistance with daily activities.

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In 2012, people age 85 or older make up only 2 percent of the U.S. population. In 2050, the national percentage is projected to be 4.8 percent. The age 85+ population is projected to more than quadruple in seven states between 2012 and 2050: Alaska (+650%), Nevada (+474 percent), Georgia (+375 percent), Colorado (+369 percent), Utah (+323 percent), Texas (+318 percent), and Virginia (+307 percent).

Figure 1. Projected Growth in the Older Population in the United States as a Percentage of 2012 Population, by Age Group

2. Many older Americans live below 250 percent of the poverty line and are likely to qualify for need-based, long-term services and supports and other publicly funded services. Older people are less likely to be below the poverty line than younger and working-age people. However, the proportion of older people who have income below 250 percent of the poverty line is much higher than for the working-age population. The percentage of Americans living below 250 percent of the poverty line is as high for the age 85+ population, those most likely to need LTSS, as it is for the age 0–24 population. This will have significant ramifications in the future because of the increasing projected growth of the age 85+ population.

3. Family caregivers provided $450 billion worth of unpaid care in 2009, almost four times Medicaid long-term services and supports spending and nearly seven times what people paid privately.\(^{39}\) Nationwide, 42 million caregivers were providing unpaid care to friends and family at any given time during 2009. They provided an average of 18.4 hours of care per week, at an average value of $11.16 per hour.\(^{40}\)

Family caregivers provide personal care and help with everyday tasks as well as health-related interventions such as administering complex medications. They help to contain health and long-term supportive care costs by providing such care and can even delay or prevent the use of more expensive hospital and nursing home care. Although family caregivers usually undertake these tasks willingly, they often experience high levels of

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emotional, physical and financial stress. Many of them juggle employment and family obligations with caregiving responsibilities. Although Medicaid is the largest payer of senior supportive care services, family caregivers are the foundation of senior care supportive services.

4. The bulk of Medicaid long-term services and supports dollars still go to nursing facilities rather than home and community-based services which are much cheaper and preferred methods of care for seniors. Medicaid is the primary payer of formal long-term supportive services in the United States (46 percent in 2009). Almost two-thirds (64 percent) of Medicaid long-term support service dollars for older people and adults with physical disabilities went to nursing facility care, even though most people prefer to live at home or in their communities. Medicaid nursing facility spending was $51.4 billion, compared to $28.7 billion for home and community-based services for older people and adults with physical disabilities.

Nursing facility care is a mandatory Medicaid entitlement. All individuals who qualify financially for Medicaid and qualify by level of disability for nursing facility care must be allowed to receive nursing facility services. That said, community-based services provided in the home are optional. While all states have mechanisms for providing home and community alternatives to nursing homes, Medicaid-eligible seniors and adults with disabilities are not necessarily entitled to such services.

5. The number of older people and adults with physical disabilities receiving Medicaid funded home and community-based services has increased, while the number of nursing facility residents has remained constant. The number of older people and adults with physical disabilities receiving community-based supports is increasing at a greater rate than the number of people living in nursing facilities. The number of older people and adults with physical disabilities receiving Medicaid funded community-based services (including those receiving home health services) increased 18 percent from 2003 to 2008, to a total of 2.5

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million Medicaid beneficiaries receiving these services.

From 2003 to 2008, the number of people using Medicaid nursing services actually declined 4 percent, from about 1.7 million to 1.6 million. During the same five-year period, the number of nursing facility residents (all payment sources) also declined slightly from 1.5 million to 1.4 million.\textsuperscript{46} In 2007, only about four percent of the 65 and older population resided in long-term care facilities such as nursing homes.\textsuperscript{47}

Across all states, Medicaid community-based support expenditures increased by 70 percent from 2004 to 2009, while Medicaid expenditures for nursing facilities increased by just 12 percent.\textsuperscript{48} While only four percent of seniors reside in long-term nursing facilities, total nursing facility expenditures are nearly twice as high as community-based support expenditures.\textsuperscript{49}

6. \textit{AARP estimates that Medicaid dollars can support roughly three people with home and community-based services for every person in an institution.}\textsuperscript{50} The need for long-term supportive services is generally expected as individuals age. However, people of all ages may need access to long-term supportive services. The services and supports needed by these populations—seniors, adults with physical disabilities, adults with intellectual disabilities, and others—as well as the costs of these services and supports, are very different. \textbf{However, for all populations, the typical cost of providing community-based services is about one-third the cost of institutional care.}\textsuperscript{51} This fact cannot be stressed enough. Older adults are happier and more efficiently served by providing cheaper holistic services to enable seniors to live within the comfort of more traditional housing options.


\textsuperscript{47} Center for Housing Policy, Housing an Aging Population: Are We Prepared, 2012, available at \url{http://www.nhc.org/media/files/AgingReport2012.pdf}


\textsuperscript{49} AARP Public Policy Institute, Across the States 2012: Profiles of Long-Term Services and Supports, 9\textsuperscript{th} Edition, 2012, available at \url{http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/public_policy_institute/ltc/2012/across-the-states-2012-full-report-AARP-ppi-ltc.pdf}

\textsuperscript{50} AARP Public Policy Institute, Across the States 2012: Profiles of Long-Term Services and Supports, 9\textsuperscript{th} Edition, 2012, available at \url{http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/public_policy_institute/ltc/2012/across-the-states-2012-full-report-AARP-ppi-ltc.pdf}

Per person, nursing facility services are almost three times as costly as community-based services for older people and adults with disabilities. In 2008, Medicaid spending for community-based services for each older person and adult with physical disabilities receiving services averaged $10,957, compared with $29,533 for each person receiving services in a nursing facility. Home health care, which is often used for short-term post-acute care, averaged $5,495 per person served.

Figure 3. Medicaid Long-Term Services and Supports Spending per Person Served, by Service, 2008

7. Registered nurse hours per resident day are correlated with better nursing facility quality measures. The number of direct care registered nurse (RN) hours per resident day correlates strongly with incidence of pressure sores, use of physical restraints, and hospital admissions. States with more direct care RN hours tended to have lower rates of pressure

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sores, lower use of restraints, and fewer hospital admissions. On average, in 2010, nursing facility residents received 3.8 hours of direct nursing care per day, of which 0.64 were RN hours.\textsuperscript{57}

Figure 4. Nursing Hours per Resident Day, 2010\textsuperscript{58}

8. The supply of assisted living units is catching up with the total number of nursing facility beds.\textsuperscript{59} Licensure requirements vary by state, however, assisted living can include a variety of residential care settings, such as adult foster care and personal care homes. Assisted living generally offers services that provide assistance with activities of daily living and instrumental activities of daily living to people in a residential setting.

Over the past few years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of assisted living units across the United States. From 2007 to 2010, supply has increased almost 18 percent, from a total capacity of 1,046,631 units to 1,233,690 units.\textsuperscript{60} During the same period,

\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}
nursing facility bed supply remained constant at about 1.7 million beds.\textsuperscript{61} This again reiterates the strong consumer preference for alternatives to nursing facilities.

**Figure 5. Assisted Living and Nursing Home Supply, 2007-2010\textsuperscript{62}**

![Bar chart showing assisted living and nursing home supply from 2007 to 2010](chart.png)

There is almost a six-fold difference in the average supply of assisted living units between the five highest and five lowest states. The average supply in the five highest states (Minnesota, Oregon, Idaho, Wisconsin, and Washington) was 62 units per 1,000 people age 65 or older, compared with \textbf{11 units in the five lowest states (District of Columbia, Louisiana, West Virginia, Mississippi, and Nevada)}.\textsuperscript{63} The national average is 31 units.\textsuperscript{64}

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Figure 6. State Variation in Assisted Living Supply

NEVADA OVERVIEW ON SENIOR HOUSING NEEDS

Of the 2.8 million residents currently living in Nevada, 13 percent (352,151 adults) are seniors aged 65 and over. Approximately 27 percent of these Nevada seniors (97,224) are veterans. While the Nevada senior population is expected to grow exponentially (more than 50 percent) between now and 2030, the Nevada veteran population is expected to decline marginally (11 percent decrease) between now and 2030.
Nevada Senior Housing Capacity

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, slightly over 5 percent of the 65 and older population occupy nursing homes, congregate care, assisted living, and board-and-care homes, and about 4.2 percent are in nursing homes at any given time. The rate of nursing home use increases dramatically with age; for those 85 and older, 15 percent lived in long-term care facilities and seven percent lived in community housing where services are available.

While there are currently roughly 350,000 Nevada seniors aged 65 and over, there are only a total of 14,418 adult day, assisted living, or skilled nursing beds to accommodate these seniors. While not every senior will need this type of supportive care, the current housing supply will accommodate only 4.1 percent of Nevada seniors. As the senior population continues to grow, the current housing supply will become increasingly insufficient.

Figure 8. Nevada Senior Housing Capacity (Bed Counts)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility Type</th>
<th>North</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>South</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult day care</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1,087</td>
<td>1,265</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assisted living facility</td>
<td>1,288</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>3,122</td>
<td>4,701</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled nursing facility</td>
<td>2,360</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>5,578</td>
<td>8,452</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,801</strong></td>
<td><strong>830</strong></td>
<td><strong>9,787</strong></td>
<td><strong>14,418</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>26%</th>
<th>6%</th>
<th>68%</th>
<th>100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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67 Office of Public Health Informatics and Epidemiology, Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health November 14, 2104
How to Meet the Demands of Nevada’s Aging Population

As the overall population ages, the numbers of the most vulnerable will grow as well. Meanwhile, the Great Recession has eaten into the reserves of many older households, reducing home equity, retirement and savings accounts. Services to help seniors age in place, and housing options that facilitate the delivery of services and help prevent premature entry into nursing homes, are not only absolutely necessary given the dramatic increases in Nevada’s aging population, but these services are preferable and more desirable than building additional skilled nursing facilities. Older adults almost universally say they want to age in their current homes, but many lack access to the services needed to ensure this outcome.

Instead of focusing on the need to build more institutional facilities, it is recommended that the state and the Nevada Department of Veterans Services expand access to the services that many individuals need to live independently, such as meal preparation; assistance with bathing, dressing, or grooming; assistance taking daily medication; and housekeeping services. At the same time, it is important to provide older adults with affordable residential options that offer co-located or integrated services within developments situated close to where individuals are currently living or in places where they can meet their needs through walking or public transit. It is quite possible that older seniors would be willing to move if affordable options with such services were available.

SENIOR HOUSING NEEDS FROM THE PROVIDER PERSPECTIVE

In addition to analyzing senior housing capacity, demand and trends, Strategic Progress conducted approximately 14 interviews and 76 surveys with stakeholders and administrators of skilled nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, group homes and adult day care facilities across the state that are knowledgeable about the needs of seniors as it relates to housing, particularly as it relates to senior veterans.

Quantitative Findings from Provider/Administrator Surveys

Strategic Progress interviewed providers of senior care facilities in addition to designing a survey instrument intended to:

1) Document how service providers think about the assistive health and senior housing challenges they currently face;
2) Gather opinions about the availability, quality, and comprehensiveness of the available programs and services; and
3) Elicit ideas for improvement and resource allocation
SENIOR HOUSING NEEDS FROM THE VETERAN PERSPECTIVE

In addition to surveying providers and administrators of veteran senior housing facilities, Strategic Progress employed the use of survey instruments and personal interviews to clarify current and anticipated future service and assistive care housing related needs for senior veterans by geographic region. This phase of the project focused exclusively on needs from the perspective of veterans and their families. Our survey of veterans represents a sampling of 287 respondents.

Quantitative Findings from Veteran Surveys

Strategic Progress designed a brief survey instrument intended to:

1) Document how veterans and their family members think about the health and housing challenges they currently or will face;
2) Gather opinions about the availability, quality, and comprehensiveness of the available programs and services; and
3) Elicit innovative ideas for improvement.

The survey data from both the provider/administrator survey and the veteran survey is included below:

Veteran Senior Assistive Care and Housing Provider Survey overview (Demographics)

There were 76 respondents to the provider/administrator survey that surveyed day facilities, group homes, assisted living, long term care and skilled nursing homes in Nevada who serve seniors generally, as well as the veteran population the NDVS was interested in gaining more information about. The largest group of respondents was those that run group homes, followed by assisted living and skilled nursing homes.
The survey received a good representation of the over 400 facilities licensed by the State of Nevada, with a total of 76 responses from providers and administrators. Of the 76 responses, 34% of the responses came from Northern Nevada. However, while nearly 58% of the responses came from Southern Nevada, this only translates into 44 total responses. This is not indicative of the large number of facilities in Southern Nevada. We would hope for a more robust rate of return from Southern Nevada in any future surveys. Of those facilities that did respond to the survey, the vast majority (40.79%) were small facilities containing 1-10 beds. There was a response rate of almost 40% (21.05% and 18.42% respectively) for 50-100 bed and 100-150 bed facilities.
These responses highlight a need for outreach and coordination with larger facilities in future surveys so that a better snapshot of facilities that serve a larger number of veterans can be captured. Of the facilities surveyed, 74% were currently serving veterans at the time of the survey, but all had previously or plan to serve veterans in the future.

**Veteran Housing Needs Assessment Survey (Demographic information)**

A total of 287 Nevada Veterans that responded to this survey, giving us a sampling of veteran perspectives on the issues, not a representative sample. Reaching the population of veterans living in senior care facilities was challenging, and Strategic Progress used on the ground resources to help veterans answer the survey questions, as many struggled with taking the survey, or understanding the questions without support. This sampling provides insight into the needs and values veterans place on the topics of interest we questioned them on, and will help the NDVS to make decisions about the allocation of resources moving forward. Of these respondents, an overwhelming majority were over the age of 50.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-10 beds</td>
<td>46.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-30 beds</td>
<td>6.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-50 beds</td>
<td>2.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-100 beds</td>
<td>21.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-150 beds</td>
<td>18.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150-200 beds</td>
<td>3.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 200 beds</td>
<td>6.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The majority of the respondents were from Northern Nevada (42.86%) with approximately 41% lived in Southern Nevada. Again, with the majority of the population centered in Southern Nevada, this highlights further the need to outreach for future surveys to obtain a better response rate from Southern Nevada. This will provide additional clarity around survey responses, and give us better data on the South.

An important highlight of survey respondents is that over 76% are currently living independently but are concerned about future healthcare and housing needs.

Q5: Are you or any of your loved ones currently using any of the following housing or healthcare facilities? (N = 190)
The high number of respondents who were living independently but were concerned about future living needs and requirements represents an important audience to target with information going forward, as this is the population who will access long term care and other facilities in the coming years. It is critical that this group is provided accurate and timely information so that they can make decisions about their future with good information and clarity, so that they can potentially access the lowest level of care necessary to meet their needs going forward, and access the benefits they are entitled to in order to pay for that care.

**Key Findings across Both the Provider and Veteran Surveys**

*Increased need for communication and education from the VA to providers of care and veterans alike*

- 41% of providers surveyed did not feel that the VA system interfaced well with the private healthcare system to provide medical benefits for veteran care and support. Another 33% were neutral in response to this question.

**Q6: How do you feel the VA system interfaces with the private healthcare system to provide medical benefits for veteran care and support? (N = 76)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interface w/ Private System</th>
<th>Not at all well</th>
<th>Not very well</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Average Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15.79%</td>
<td>27.43%</td>
<td>32.89%</td>
<td>13.16%</td>
<td>10.53%</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This underscores that gaps exist in interfacing between these two systems, and causes us to ask additional questions as to what gaps exist and why. Focus groups could be utilized to explore these gaps and surface solutions to these challenges.

- Additionally, 39% (16.67% and 22.22%) of providers surveyed felt unknowledgeable or unsupported with respect to their facility accessing funding sources that are specific to veterans.

**Q7: How knowledgeable/supported is your facility in accessing funding sources that are specific to veterans? (pensions and disability payments) (N = 72)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge &amp; Support?</th>
<th>Not at all knowledgeable/supported</th>
<th>Not very knowledgeable/supported</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat knowledgeable/supported</th>
<th>Extremely knowledgeable/supported</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Average Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16.67%</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
<td>45.28%</td>
<td>36.66%</td>
<td>15.28%</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This again highlights a need for greater communication and education from the VA to providers of care, especially considering that the price of a facility was either somewhat or very important to over 90% of veterans surveyed when selecting an assisted living or skilled nursing facility for either them or a loved one.
Q3: When selecting an assisted living, adult day care, or skilled nursing facility, either for yourself or a loved one, please rank the level of importance on the following factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Not at all Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Unimportant</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness of the facility</td>
<td>1.06%</td>
<td>0.35%</td>
<td>0.35%</td>
<td>10.10%</td>
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<td>Quality rating of facility</td>
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<td>2.09%</td>
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<td>78.75%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location</td>
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<td>12.54%</td>
<td>37.63%</td>
<td>45.84%</td>
<td>131</td>
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<tr>
<td>My spouse can be cared for in the same facility</td>
<td>19.51%</td>
<td>1.05%</td>
<td>11.50%</td>
<td>16.03%</td>
<td>51.92%</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facility is a state operated veterans home</td>
<td>0.41%</td>
<td>4.53%</td>
<td>26.83%</td>
<td>30.66%</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational activities</td>
<td>1.74%</td>
<td>1.39%</td>
<td>11.50%</td>
<td>47.04%</td>
<td>38.33%</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being around other veterans</td>
<td>6.27%</td>
<td>5.23%</td>
<td>24.04%</td>
<td>37.28%</td>
<td>27.18%</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- This lack of support or knowledge of funding sources was evident to over 68% of veterans that responded to the survey who felt that the facility that they or a loved one was a resident in was either not evident or they were unsure.

Q8: Do you feel your facility (or your loved one's facility) is supported/knowledgeable in accessing funding sources that are specific to veterans (pensions and disability payments)?

- 55% of veterans surveyed felt very little support or no support from the Department of Veterans Services in their ability to access senior housing. This represents an area for
improvement in terms of outreach and education, especially in light of the large number of respondents still living independently. The NDVS has an opportunity to impact the quality of care veterans currently in homes receive, as well as the quality of care veteran in coming years receive as they transition from living independently to higher levels of care.

Q4: How supported do you feel by the Department of Veterans Services in your ability to access senior housing?

Increased Need for services and Community Collaborations

- 80% of providers felt that there were some additional needs or significant additional needs for veterans in their respective facilities in the areas of mental health, dental, and other critical areas
Q8: How great is the need for increased specific services, such as mental health, dental care, etc. for senior veterans in your facility? N=72

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Increased Need for Services?</th>
<th>No additional needs</th>
<th>Very little additional needs</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Some additional needs</th>
<th>Significant additional needs</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Average Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.39%</td>
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<td>15.28%</td>
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<td>33.33%</td>
<td></td>
<td>72</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Over 78% of providers responding indicated that the community provided very little or no supports with respect to veterans in their facilities.

Q9: Does the community provide additional services and supports to veterans in your facility? Volunteer hours, non-profit services, etc?

- These two questions highlight a significant area of need for veterans currently living in care facilities. First, opportunities for collaboration with additional service providers in areas where gaps exist (dental, mental health, etc.) need to be developed so that these services can be provided for those no longer living independently in the community.

Additionally, there are various community and volunteer based organizations within the State of Nevada who wish to get involved with veterans in the community, including those that live in some sort of residential care facilities. It is incumbent on the VA, and the State of Nevada, as well as providers of care to outreach to these organizations and groups in order to provide meaningful opportunities for engagement to improve the quality of life for veterans living in private facilities.
General Observations

- 77% of facilities provide care to spouses

Q5: Do veterans have the option to be provided care with their spouses in your facility?

This is an important finding because 68% of Veteran’s indicated that this was an important factor in selecting a facility. This is a policy decision that administrators have control over in setting regulations for their specific facilities and one that they should take note of.

Q3: When selecting an assisted living, adult day care, or skilled nursing facility, either for yourself or a loved one, please rank the level of importance on the following factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Not at all Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Unimportant</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness of the facility</td>
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<td>0.35%</td>
<td>0.35%</td>
<td>10.16%</td>
<td>88.15%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality/rating of facility</td>
<td>1.74%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5.23%</td>
<td>25.05%</td>
<td>65.16%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>3.48%</td>
<td>1.05%</td>
<td>12.64%</td>
<td>37.63%</td>
<td>45.64%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>1.74%</td>
<td>2.44%</td>
<td>11.50%</td>
<td>16.03%</td>
<td>51.92%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My spouse can be cared for in the same facility</td>
<td>19.51%</td>
<td>1.05%</td>
<td>11.50%</td>
<td>16.03%</td>
<td>51.92%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facility is a state operated veterans home</td>
<td>9.41%</td>
<td>4.53%</td>
<td>26.83%</td>
<td>30.66%</td>
<td>24.57%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational activities</td>
<td>1.74%</td>
<td>1.39%</td>
<td>11.50%</td>
<td>24.04%</td>
<td>37.28%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being around other veterans</td>
<td>6.27%</td>
<td>5.23%</td>
<td>24.04%</td>
<td>37.28%</td>
<td>27.18%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are also opportunities the NDVS and the VA can explore to meet the socialization and communication needs of veterans who express a value around being with other veterans. With
64.76% of survey respondents indicating that being around other veterans was somewhat or very important to them when selecting a facility, we question whether there are opportunities for recreational and social programs to bring veterans from private homes together to build relationships and benefit from each other’s experiences.

**Qualitative Findings from Provider Interviews**

Interviews were intended to informally survey local administrators and providers of adult daycare facilities, assisted living facilities, skilled nursing facilities, academics and senior care advocates across the state about their main challenges, concerns and assets related to the issue of senior housing needs throughout the state of Nevada. Qualitative questions were administered orally during interviews, and oftentimes, in conjunction with the above referenced survey instrument to elicit and document feedback.

Strategic Progress conducted 14 one-on-one interviews with providers, academics and advocates to understand what the main challenges were meeting the needs of this population, and what the differences were, if any, in service provision or quality of life measures for veterans in the State Home versus a private facility.

Respondents noted that Nevada was one of the last states in the country to build and open a State Veterans Home, much like we were one of the last states to open a Veterans Administration Hospital. One interviewee cited the fact that some, even smaller states like Maine for example, have as many as 6 state-run veteran homes, and Louisiana has 5, while Nevada has one, and is now building its second. This was highlighted in contrast to the multiple military bases Nevada operates and maintains.

Interviewees cited a few main differences between living in a state-run home and private home that impact the quality of life for veterans, as well as other needs for veterans in senior housing:

**Benefits and community support-**

- The additional $97 per diem that the VA pays for veterans in the Nevada State Veterans Home, which veterans in private homes do not receive. This funding helps to provide for additional staffing, services, supports and a more robust recreational (including off-site recreational opportunities) program than most private homes can afford to provide.
- There is a chaplain on staff in the Nevada State Home, which is typically not seen in most private facilities.
- Donations from the private business and citizen community to the State Home are marked and make an impact on quality of life. Most private facilities do not receive this type of community support for its residents, veteran or not.
- Volunteers are plentiful at the Nevada State Home, providing additional services and supports to residents, where private homes do not typically receive this type of support.

Attention to unique medical and mental health needs-
- In a State Veterans Home, the unique mental health needs of veterans are well known, understood, and staff is trained to care for veterans with these needs. In private facilities, education and training around the unique mental health needs of veterans are not as standardized across every facility, sometimes resulting in veterans with challenging behaviors or issues with being exited from placements.
- As one interviewee stated, “Veterans that have a history of behavioral problems in previous facilities will often face challenges finding placements again. Given the choice between a small woman and a male veteran with a history of PTSD and behaviors, many facilities will take the woman. People are afraid of these veterans. The combination of cognitive impairments, or PTSD, and unskilled or untrained nursing can send a veteran to a psychiatric unit instead of a nursing home.”

**Ability to provide staff benefits**
- The Nevada State Veterans Home, or any state run home, can offer Public Employees’ Retirement System (PERS) benefits for staff, which private facilities cannot. PERS is a tax-qualified defined benefit plan created by the Legislature as an independent public agency to provide a reasonable base income to qualified employees who have been employed by a public employer and whose earning capacity has been removed or has been substantially reduced by age or disability. This helps to retain staff in an industry that has traditionally low retention rates, and high turnover in care positions. As found in the veteran interviews, staff turnover can be difficult on senior veterans, particularly those with mental health issues or dementia.

**Connecting to other veterans**
- Being around other veterans, and feeling connected, can help combat the depression that is common in a long-term care setting. Interviewees of private homes stated that they thought their residents were receiving high-quality care at their facilities, but noted that they were often found in groups with other veterans, and that veterans seemed to stick together.
- One interviewee stated, “You will often see veterans grouped together in the home. They have shared experiences, they understand each other in ways that other people don’t. They get a lot of benefit from being together at this stage of their life.”

**Continuum of care services**
- One interviewee stated that group homes provide an invaluable service in the continuum of senior care. For veterans who don’t qualify for a nursing home setting, but can’t be at home any longer, group homes can be ideal. “Unfortunately though, it is very rare that there is much expertise in that setting. And if you are not very physically mobile, you can be left alone, and if you are physically active, you are often considered a wandering risk, which leads to more restrictive settings.”
- Adult day facilities were noted to be a much-needed resource in the continuum of care for senior veterans and seniors in general. “Adult day is huge for preventing people from needing more costly residential care.”
- Another interviewee stated that there were residents in his home that would benefit
from adult day instead of being in a home, but could not afford the private pay. “They need to be able to use adult day more easily on Medicaid, and not have to pay privately, and this is a challenge in Nevada. Other states, like California, have done this successfully and built out a strong network of adult day facilities, but we are behind the times.”

Access to services-
- Interviewees in private settings that had access to Veteran Services Officers (VSO) stated that they were very valuable to them, and that they would like to have more VSO support on site.
- Dental care was cited as a need by interviewees, as well as access to mental health services. “Mental health is lacking even in the federal VA hospital,” said one interviewee. “They do what they can, but mental health services across the state are needed for this population. For all seniors in care.”

Qualitative Findings from Veteran Interviews

Strategic Progress conducted one-on-one interviews with veterans across the state who are currently using or residing in adult daycare facilities, assisted living facilities, and skilled nursing facilities. Interviews will use the above referenced survey instrument as a platform to elicit and document feedback.

Strategic Progress conducted 13 in-person interviews with men (8) and women (5) who are residents of the Nevada State Veteran’s Home in Boulder City, Nevada. We chose to do one-on-one, in-person interviews as a means of conducting and simplifying the survey process for this population, as the majority were over 75 years old and had memory and physical issues that would prevent them from taking a paper survey. Strategic Progress sat with the residents and read and explained the survey questions so they were able to answer and give their input. As the only state-run veterans home in Nevada, the home receives additional funding for its residents compared to private homes. It also has a rich and robust volunteer presence, with volunteers providing services and supports to clients, as well as donors who provide additional benefits to the residents, such as tickets to movies, restaurant vouchers and other gifts. This makes it qualitatively different than other facilities in Nevada, where volunteers and donor resources are not focused on veteran residents to the same degree, or at all. Residents of the home identified similar concerns as residents of private facilities, as evidenced by their responses below:

**VETERAN HOUSING NEEDS IN PERSON SURVEY/INTERVIEWS (State Home)**

1. Please select your approximate age range.
   - 50-60
   - 60-65 8% (1)
   - 65-75 8% (1)
   - 75 and above 84% (11)
2. When selecting an assisted living, adult day care, or skilled nursing facility, please rank the level of importance on the following factors?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
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<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
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</thead>
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<td>23% (3)</td>
<td>69% (9)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality/rating of facility</td>
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<td>39% (5)</td>
<td>46% (6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
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<td>54% (7)</td>
<td>23% (3)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My spouse can be cared for in the same facility</td>
<td>46% (6)</td>
<td>46% (6)</td>
<td>8% (1)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facility is a state operated veterans home</td>
<td>23% (3)</td>
<td>31% (4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recreational activities</td>
<td>23% (3)</td>
<td>54% (7)</td>
<td>23% (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being around other veterans</td>
<td>23% (3)</td>
<td>38% (5)</td>
<td>39% (5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Do you feel your facility is supported/knowledgeable in accessing funding sources that are specific to veterans (pensions and disability payments)?
   - Yes 85% (11)
   - No
   - Not sure 15% (2)

4. Do you feel it would be helpful for your facility to have access to a Veteran Services Officer devoted solely to assisting the veterans in your facility with accessing VA benefits?
   - Yes 77% (10)
   - No
   - Not sure 23% (3)

5. How supported do you feel by the Department of Veterans Services in accessing senior housing?
   - Extremely supported 30% (4)
   - Somewhat supported 62% (8)
   - Very little support 8% (1)
   - Absolutely no support

In addition to conducting one-on-one interviews with residents of the Nevada State Veterans Home, we also conducted nine one-on-one in-person interviews with residents of four private nursing homes as well as with 10 veterans who were living independently but were concerned about senior care options moving forward. Their responses, although not a representative sample of veterans, hit on some common themes also echoed in the quantitative survey data.
   - The most common barrier to services mentioned by interviewees was the lack of
information about what services and supports were available, and how a veteran could access them.

- Interviewees expressed concern about not being able to navigate the benefits system, and stated that often the system took a long time to respond to questions, claims and requests for support.

- Veteran interviewees often stated they felt the most supported when they were given benefits information by another veteran, someone who had gone through the process themselves, and knew how to navigate the system. Many veterans asked for a resource guide or benefits guide that would assist them in long term planning.

- The main need identified was time with a Veteran Services Officer to support them with benefits, access to the VA, and other issues.

- In addition, the veterans in private homes told us they wanted more access to other veterans to build relationships, communicate, and share experiences.

- For the veterans in the private homes, isolation and lack of volunteer or community outreach was more of an issue than for those veterans in the State Home.

- The veterans we talked to were generally satisfied with their relation with the VA except for long waits between appointments. They were understanding of this issue and voiced awareness that the VA hospital staff was overworked and had many responsibilities with which to deal.

In order to gain input and feedback from aged veterans in nursing homes, we conducted the interviews in an informal manner, asking questions, talking with the veteran in a conversational style and talking with the veteran about their quality of life and what resources they still need.
NEVADA GEOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF SENIOR HOUSING RESOURCES

In order to represent the dramatic differences between the urban and rural regions of Nevada in terms of access to senior care facilities, we have designed an interactive GIS map that shows all of the facilities licensed by the State of Nevada, and where they are located. This map, located at http://bit.ly/1z5XCYx is searchable, interactive, and will provide address and location information to the user. Users will also be able to modify search parameters to search for only adult day facilities, for example, or only skilled nursing facilities. Because there are over 400 facilities plotted on the map, although it is printed here to give a graphic representation of what is available online, the map in its printed format is not as meaningful due to the nature of GIS maps to show so many data points in a cluster. It is in the online interactive format, where the user can draw stronger conclusions about the distribution of resources across the State. For example, the user will see the glaring need for services in the rurals, where many communities are seeing increases in aging populations and many residents have to travel for services.
RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase the availability of services and supports to help senior veterans age in place
- Promote the development of housing options that facilitate the delivery of services and help prevent the premature entry into nursing homes
- These services are not only necessary given the dramatic increase in Nevada’s aging population, but these services often result in higher quality of life standards for senior veterans and are more cost effective than higher level care placements when a senior can potentially remain at home with support
- Expand access to services that many individuals need to live independently, including meal preparation, assistance with bathing, dressing or grooming, taking daily medications and housekeeping services
- Provide older adults with affordable residential options that offer co-located or integrated services within developments situated close to where they are currently living, and have supports, or where they can walk to meet their needs, or use public transit
- Increase access to adult day services, which provide a much-needed lower acuity placement for many senior veterans in the continuum of care.
- Increase support for veterans to access much needed dental and mental health care while aging in place, as well as in private homes and state home care
- Increase access to veterans, in particular those in private homes, to Veteran Service Officer supports
- Build collaborations with community providers, the VA, NDVS and other stakeholders to bring additional volunteer and community resources into the private homes across the state to provide greater community support to veterans in those homes
- Work with private home providers to determine if there are any recreational or social opportunities for veterans to network, socialize, and build relationships together while living in different senior care placements to improve quality of life
- Provide education, training and outreach to senior housing staff and administrators regarding veteran benefits
- Ensure education and training regarding evidence based practices for veteran specific mental and behavioral challenges are provided to senior housing staff in community based facilities
- Promote education and outreach to families and caregivers of veterans to improve awareness of benefits, services and supports
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Strategic Progress, LLC is a Nevada based company specializing in regional planning, public policy research and advocacy, federal and private grant development, fundraising and strategic positioning of large-scale initiatives.

Cyndy Ortiz Gustafson, Strategic Progress founder and CEO, has a MA in Political Science and Public Law from Washington State University, and over 10 years of leadership experience at the national, state and local levels conducting policy research, building coalitions, designing communication strategies and issues management plans, and strategically positioning large-scale public policy initiatives. She directed the research and writing of this project.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Nevada Department of Veterans Services is committed to addressing issues and challenges that face Nevada veterans and has prioritized veteran homelessness and the development of policy, program and practice solutions to advance outcomes in this space. Understanding that local communities across Nevada have been working to address homelessness for many years, NDVS undertook a landscape analysis and interview process before determining what role it should play in leveraging existing work, assets and ongoing dialog.

This document represents the landscape analysis conducted in advance of the November 6, 2014, NDVS Statewide Veteran Homelessness Convening, as well as key informant interview summaries and a summary of the convening outputs and outcomes.

The research and convening was designed to set the stage for action and statewide conversation around veteran homelessness, and to engage leaders, stakeholders, providers and veterans from across Nevada who do not often get the chance to communicate with each other about shared barriers, challenges, opportunities and leverage points.

The goal of the Nevada Department of Veterans Services Veteran Homelessness Initiative is not to create a new system, infrastructure, or set of programs, but rather to leverage the existing assets of the Nevada Department of Veterans Services and Governor’s Office of Military and Veterans Policy to advance outcomes and deepen the work already being done in communities and regions across the Nevada. The NDVS is strengthening its commitment to the homeless veteran population by prioritizing and acting on strategies surfaced and detailed by experts in the field during interviews and a statewide convening held November 6, 2014.

As a result of implementing the above strategies, Nevada will improve communication among providers of homeless services across the state, increase leveraging of resources, increase federal competitiveness, and improve access to services for homeless veterans. We will also be able to demonstrate the impact of the broader systems change initiative we have put into place across the state with the Green Zone Veterans’ Initiative, and show the return on investment for funding the right things, connecting the existing system infrastructure, and the cost savings that is achievable by coordinating services and actions at the state level.

REPORT SCOPE, METHODOLOGY & KEY FINDINGS

Project Scope & Methodology

The Nevada Department of Veterans Services (NVDS) provides access to benefits, programs and services to Nevada veterans and their families. The department promotes awareness and offers veterans and their families a variety of resources related to advocacy, education, benefits assistance, memorials, and medical care. The mission of the Nevada Department of Veterans Services is to improve the lives of Nevada veterans and help them integrate into their communities.
The Nevada Department of Veterans Services hired Strategic Progress to:
- Conduct a statewide landscape analysis in the area of veterans homelessness
- Convene leaders, providers and stakeholders to better understand barriers and opportunities to improve outcomes for homeless veterans
- Connect providers and leaders in the veteran homeless space across Nevada in order to leverage (at the state level) the work each provider, municipality and coalition was already doing.

This report includes a compilation of existing research demonstrating trends and best practices on homelessness both nationwide and across the state of Nevada. This research is meant to set the stage for action at the state level, and to inform actors in each of the three regions of the state -- northern urban, southern urban, and rural -- of what the key data points are in each of the other regions in terms of homeless veteran issues.

In addition to providing snapshots of the data produced at the local and regional levels, Strategic Progress extensively interviewed program providers, leaders across Nevada, and key stakeholders to determine what infrastructure currently exists for homeless veterans in various parts of the state, what assets providers have in the work they are doing, what partnerships exist, and what challenges are present in serving this population locally, regionally and as a state.

Strategic Progress designed this report for use in a statewide convening of homeless service providers, elected officials, leaders and stakeholders held on November 6, 2014. By bringing together key players in the field of homelessness across the state, our goal was to improve communication among key leaders, organizations and entities, to increase the opportunity to leverage resources, and to improve access to services for homeless veterans.

**OPENING DOORS: NATIONAL OVERVIEW ON HOMELESSNESS**

The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) created the nation’s first comprehensive federal strategy designed to prevent and end homelessness. This strategy, known as Opening Doors, was presented to the Office of the President and Congress on June 22, 2010, and outlined the national goal and corresponding strategies to end chronic homelessness by 2015; to prevent and end homelessness among veterans by 2015; to prevent and end homelessness for families, youth, and children by 2020; and to set a path toward ending all forms of homelessness.

One of the most promising approaches to ending homelessness, especially among families with children, is the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program. This program provides a variety of financial assistance to prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless and help those who are experiencing homelessness to be quickly re-housed and stabilized. Follow-up assistance in accessing employment and mainstream services, money management, and maintaining housing helps families keep their housing. The United States Department of
Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has been providing funding to communities that implement HUD’s Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program.

Before the introduction of the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program and the Federal Opening Doors strategy, communities across the nation and the state of Nevada had already been working in earnest towards creating and implementing strategies aimed at ending area homelessness. The federal plan provided much needed guidance, consistency, and resources to assist local communities in coordinating their efforts.

To measure progress towards the Plan’s goals, Opening Doors uses six key measures to evaluate plan progress. The first four measures are linked directly to the target subpopulations that are included in the plan goals:

1. Change in the number of total people experiencing homelessness
2. Change in the number of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness
3. Change in the number of veterans experiencing homelessness
4. Change in the number of people in families experiencing homelessness

The other two measures are intended to track progress against two overarching plan strategies that have been identified as providing stability for individuals and families that have experienced homelessness so that they can stay in housing and avoid future episodes of homelessness:

5. Change in the number of permanent supportive housing units;
6. Change in the number of households exiting homeless assistance programs with earned income and/or mainstream benefits

On a single night in January 2013, there were 610,042 people experiencing homelessness in the United States. Nearly 65 percent of those were homeless individuals staying in sheltered locations, and the remaining 35 percent were living in unsheltered locations (on the streets). Approximately 15 percent of those counted were people in families, 18 percent were considered chronically homeless, and 9.5 percent were veterans.

VETERANS HOMELESSNESS NATIONAL OVERVIEW

Factors Contributing to Veterans Homelessness

Causes of homelessness among veterans are similar to causes of homelessness among non-veterans (interrelated economic and personal factors and a shortage of affordable housing). However, veterans experiencing homelessness have distinct characteristics that make it difficult to regain stability. They are more likely to be unsheltered and to experience homelessness for longer periods of time than non-veterans. Veterans have high rates of Post-Traumatic Stress
Disorder, traumatic brain injury, and sexual assault, all of which increase their risk of homelessness. About half of veterans experiencing homelessness have serious mental illness, half have a history with the criminal justice system, and nearly 70 percent have substance abuse disorders. Several homeless veterans are also dealing with physical injuries sustained during active service.

Veterans Homelessness Decreasing Nationwide

One of the key pillars of the nationwide Opening Doors strategic plan is to end veterans homelessness by 2015. Currently, there are three primary programs designed specifically to house veterans who are homeless or threatened with imminent homelessness: When we think about the assets we have as a state to advance outcomes for homeless veterans, we include these three programs in that category of deployable resources.

1. **Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF):** This program can be used for up to 90 days and consists of short-term rental assistance and connections to medical and employment services. The principal goal of this short-term help is to link veterans and their families on the brink of homelessness to mainstream assistance programs.

2. **Grant and Per Diem (GPD):** This program can provide rental assistance and support services for up to two years. Transition to paying unsubsidized rents in the same housing unit with continued support services is allowed as needed. Grants provide funds to build the facilities used in these programs.

3. **HUD - VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH):** HUD-VASH is geared towards the chronically homeless veteran and provides a long-term voucher for rental assistance. The VASH voucher is a key component of the ‘Housing First’ approach to ending homelessness. More than 65 percent of HUD-VASH program participants were chronically homeless at entry.

Thousands of homeless veterans have found stable housing in recent years, thanks to federal, state and local initiatives combating the crisis. At the national level, homelessness among veterans has declined by nearly 40 percent over the last five years. This decrease is more than likely related to the combined efforts of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as they have been focusing on the national goal of ending veteran homelessness by 2015. Both organizations have devoted increased resources to this cause while also making substantially improved efforts to measure and decrease homelessness generally.
According to the 2013 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, while homelessness has declined significantly for all veterans nationwide, the most significant decrease is attributed to unsheltered veterans. This is a significant finding, as veterans are traditionally more likely than other homeless individuals to remain unsheltered while experiencing housing instabilities.\textsuperscript{x}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2012-2013</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless veterans</td>
<td>-7.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sheltered</td>
<td>-1.3%</td>
<td>(8,714)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsheltered</td>
<td>-15.7%</td>
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Looking Toward the Future

Even with the significant progress made to date, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) recognizes that efforts must be accelerated to meet the goal of ending veteran homelessness by 2015. Commitment and coordination between the White House, the VA, HUD, and the USICH to end homelessness among veterans and their families remains steadfast.

The Council encourages increased investments in services and strategies that:\textsuperscript{xi}

(1) Promote Faster Connections to Permanent Housing

Ending veteran homelessness means connecting veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness to housing as quickly as possible. The VA Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program provides a clear example of the impact that focused, strategic investments can
have on ensuring veterans obtain and maintain housing. This program provides funding for nonprofit organizations and consumer cooperatives to deliver supportive services and financial assistance to very low-income veteran families experiencing or at risk of homelessness. SSVF offers support services and financial assistance to help homeless veterans move as quickly as possible into housing and attain housing stability. For those with housing in jeopardy, SSVF helps veteran families remain housed by providing supports like landlord mediation and short-term financial assistance. The rate of homeless veterans moving into permanent housing has increased by 40 percent compared to a year ago.xii

(2) Identify Veterans in Need of Support and Connect them with the Right Services

Ending homelessness among veterans also requires reaching every veteran in need of assistance. The VA established the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans (1-877-4AID-VET) to identify veterans experiencing homelessness or housing crises, and engage them with the most appropriate interventions. Through this free, 24 hours access, national resource, veterans and their families experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness can connect with the VA services and benefits they have earned including housing programs and supportive services. Today this call center receives nearly 10,000 per month.xiii

In October 2012, the VA also implemented a clinical reminder within its VA medical facilities to assess homelessness and housing instability among every veteran seeking VA health care. VA’s National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans identified two questions strongly correlated with veterans’ risk factors for homelessness:

- In the past two months, have you been living in stable housing that you own, rent, or stay in as part of a household?
- If not, are you worried or concerned that in the next two months you may not have stable housing that you own, rent, or stay in as part of a household?

These questions are now asked of all veterans receiving outpatient services from VA Medical Centers. In the last quarter of 2012, almost 1.26 million veterans were assessed using these questions, and 14,393 veterans experiencing homelessness or housing instability and an additional 17,405 veterans at-risk of homelessness or housing instability were identified and connected to services.xiv

The VA’s proactive approach with this clinical reminder is one example of how systematic assessment can assist with outreach and early detection of homelessness and housing instability.

Community-based organizations conducting outreach and providing services to people experiencing homelessness, including veterans, are also helping to identify veterans in need by asking simple questions about military service in order to identify potential veterans. Through early detection, veterans can receive less expensive forms of prevention assistance, like conflict mediation or utility assistance, and potentially avoid a costly and traumatic housing crisis.
While promoting faster access to permanent housing and identifying veterans in need of supports is crucial, so is the ability to ensure veterans are successfully linked to the range of benefits and services available to address their needs, many of which are provided outside of the VA system. Providers are engaging veterans and documenting dramatic increases in veterans’ access to important mainstream benefits, such as VA medical services, veterans’ disability payments, social security disability income, veterans’ pensions, Medicaid, unemployment insurance, Medicare, general financial assistance, social security retirement, and TANF.

USICH and member agencies are streamlining veterans’ access to these important resources, wherever possible. At a community level, the success of SSVF providers in increasing veterans’ access to these important benefits suggests the opportunity available for community-based organizations to help veterans access the resources available to them, which can be critical to ending homelessness, ensuring housing stability, and promoting recovery.

Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness

Ending homelessness among veterans, and indeed ending all forms of homelessness, is a national effort that requires the support of a variety of public and private organizations and agencies at all levels of government. Since the launch of Opening Doors, federal agencies have been implementing several targeted strategies and initiatives to help communities end homelessness among veterans and other populations, and local communities have strengthened their efforts to achieve that goal.

The Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness is a way to solidify partnerships and secure commitments to end veteran homelessness from mayors across the country. On June 4, 2014, First Lady Michelle Obama announced that a growing coalition of mayors, governors, and county officials are committed to ending veteran homelessness in their communities by the end of 2015, and called on additional mayors and local leaders to join this effort.

The Mayors Challenge is a complementary effort intended to help generate public awareness and attention, increase learning and information sharing across initiatives and communities, and to help inspire even greater progress, locally and nationally. The public commitment of mayors can help galvanize local efforts and foster more purposeful coordination of resources and strategies.

In the state of Nevada, Mayor Andy Hafen of Henderson, Mayor Carolyn Goodman of Las Vegas, Mayor John Lee of North Las Vegas, and Mayor Robert Cashell of Reno have also joined the Mayors Challenge. Mayors from the rural or frontier portions of the state are currently not represented.
VA 25 Cities Initiative

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) launched the 25 Cities Initiative to help communities with high concentrations of homeless veterans intensify and integrate their local efforts to end veteran homelessness by 2015. This is a joint effort by the VA, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness and local community partners (city government, housing authorities, community providers) to identify, by name, all of the remaining homeless veterans in their respective communities and work together to find permanent housing solutions for these veterans and chronically homeless individuals. The Home Depot Foundation is a sponsor of the initiative.

Participants in the 25 Cities Initiative include: Atlanta • Baltimore • Boston • Chicago • Denver • Detroit • Fresno • Honolulu • Houston • Las Vegas • Los Angeles • Miami • New Orleans • New York City • Orlando • Philadelphia • Phoenix • Portland • Riverside • San Diego • San Francisco • Seattle • Tampa • Tucson • Washington, DC.

For the city of Las Vegas, participating in this initiative has led to an increase in valuable technical assistance provided by the Federal Government in addressing the goal of ending veteran homelessness by 2015.

NEVADA OVERVIEW

Nevada has one of the highest rates of homelessness across the nation on a per capita basis. On a per capita basis, the five states with the highest rates of homelessness include Hawaii (465 homeless people per 100,000 residents), followed by New York (399), California (367), Oregon (360), and Nevada (312).xx Six states across the country have more than half of their homeless population living in unsheltered locations, including: California, Florida, Arkansas, Nevada, Mississippi, and Oregon.xx

On November 4, 2013, Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval signed an Executive Order establishing the creation of a statewide Nevada Interagency Council on Homelessness (NICH). The council’s purpose is to coordinate and focus the state's efforts to effectively address the challenge of homelessness throughout the state of Nevada. The Council will provide the opportunity for an integrated approach towards addressing homelessness and promoting interagency cooperation. The Council will work to increase the awareness of homeless issues among state and local government agencies and local organizations that provide services to people who are homeless. While there are several existing coalitions that exist throughout the state devoted to ending homelessness, this council will have more authority to implement recommendations because of the Governor’s authorization.

The Continuum of Care (CoC) is a set of three competitively-awarded programs from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) created to address the problems of homelessness in a comprehensive manner with other federal agencies. Nevada has three CoCs:
Northern Nevada, Southern Nevada and the Balance of State. The balance of state CoC is referred to as the Rural Nevada Continuum of Care (RNCoC). CoCs are most commonly organized around two main goals: (1) planning for a homeless housing and service system in a community and (2) applying for funding from HUD’s competitive McKinney-Vento Act programs. Additionally, the CoCs must plan and be responsive to new regulations issued as part of the HEARTH Act.\textsuperscript{xxi}

The annual homeless census required by HUD shows an overall 27 percent decrease in homelessness between 2009 and 2014 in the state of Nevada.

**Figure 3. Nevada Statewide Homeless Point in Time Counts, 2009 - 2014**

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\begin{axis}[
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height=0.5\textwidth,
axis lines*=left,
axis line style={-},
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\addplot[blue,mark=*] table[x index=0,y index=1] {data.csv};
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\legend{Homeless,Sheltered,Unsheltered}
\end{axis}
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\end{center}

*Source: Clark County Social Services Regional Initiatives Office*

### Homelessness among Nevada Veterans

According to the American Community Survey, there were an estimated 229,000 Nevada veterans in 2012, approximately 8.4 percent of the state’s population.\textsuperscript{xxii} The majority of Nevada’s homeless veterans are found in Southern Nevada. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs estimates, about 68 percent of Nevada veterans as a whole resided in Clark County in 2012.\textsuperscript{xxiii} This is approximately the same proportion of the general Nevada population in Clark County (72 percent in 2012). Fifteen percent of the remaining veterans were estimated to be in Washoe County in 2012.\textsuperscript{xxiv}

**Figure 4. Nevada Point in Time Counts of Homeless Veterans, 2005 - 2013\textsuperscript{xxv}**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Las Vegas/Clark Co. CoC</td>
<td>506(195)</td>
<td>2,321(1,486)</td>
<td>2,262(1,276)</td>
<td>1,359 (708)</td>
<td>866(460)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reno/Sparks/Washoe Co. CoC</td>
<td>137(48)</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>150(8)</td>
<td>65(27)</td>
<td>73(9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RNCoC</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7(6)</td>
<td>6(3)</td>
<td>7(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>797(243)</td>
<td>2,389(1,486)</td>
<td>2419 (1290)</td>
<td>1,430 (738)</td>
<td>946(472)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{xxv}
The 2013 Point in Time Nevada homeless count of 472 unsheltered veterans and 464 additional veterans in temporary shelter gives proof that Nevada has not finished the job of providing housing to every veteran. Twice as many veterans are estimated to experience homelessness throughout the year.\textsuperscript{xvi} Behind the visible problem of homeless veterans are an additional 8,000 Nevada veteran households that make an income of less than 30 percent of average median income and pay more than 50 percent of that income to gross housing costs.\textsuperscript{xvii} These veteran households are at risk of homelessness.

In the sections that follow, this report will address the current state of homelessness and the initiatives in place to address the problem of homelessness (as of October 2014) in the Southern, Northern, and rural regions of Nevada.

**Southern Nevada Community Profile**

According to data from the 2014 Southern Nevada Homeless Census & Survey, Southern Nevada saw an increase in its homeless population from 2013, and approximately 36,700 Southern Nevadans experienced homelessness at least once in the previous year. The number of homeless people in Southern Nevada increased by 28 percent from the previous year with a total count of 9,417 homeless in 2014.\textsuperscript{xxviii} Even though the homeless population has risen, it remains below the 2009 peak of 13,388. Other cities and regions also have experienced rising rates of homelessness including Seattle, Boston and New York City.\textsuperscript{xxix}

The rise in homelessness in Southern Nevada is attributed to the region’s slow-recovering economy, which continues to take a toll on financially vulnerable individuals, according to Tim Burch, director of the Clark County Department of Social Service and a member of the Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition’s Committee on Homelessness.

Between 2007 and 2013, there was a 56 percent decline in unsheltered homeless persons and a 7 percent increase in shelter resource utilization. There was also a similar increase in resource utilization among veterans; in 2013, 60 percent of homeless veterans were located in shelters or transitional housing compared to just 44 percent in 2012.\textsuperscript{xxx}

In 2014, there were 355 households experiencing homelessness with at least one adult and one child; homeless veterans comprised 0.3 percent (1 household) of this population. There were 7,370 households experiencing homelessness without children; homeless veterans comprised 16.6 percent (1,227 households) of this population.\textsuperscript{xxxi}

**Southern Nevada Homeless Veterans Statistical Overview, 2014 Point in Time Count\textsuperscript{xxxii}**:
- 17.0 percent (158 persons) of survey respondents were veterans, and of these veterans, 6.4 percent (10 persons) were female, and 1.9 percent (3 persons) were transgender.
- Veteran homelessness declined by 8 percent between 2012 and 2013
- The largest percentage of homeless veterans reported they are White/Caucasian (57.2 percent), followed by Black/African American (28.9 percent).
• 71.3 percent of veteran respondents reported an Honorable Discharge; 10.8 percent of veteran respondents reported a discharge status of either Dishonorable or Other Than Honorable. This is noteworthy, as these veterans do not qualify for multiple types of standard government veteran benefits due to their discharge status.

• The majority (54.9 percent) of homeless veterans reported that they had no disabling conditions; 35.6 percent reported at least one disabling condition; 18.7 percent of the homeless veteran population reported having two disabling conditions; 37.5 percent of homeless veteran respondents reported having three or more disabling conditions.
Figure 5. Southern Nevada Homeless Veterans Population by Race, 2014

Figure 6. Discharge Status of Southern Nevada Veteran Respondents, 2009-2014

Figure 7. Number of Disabling Conditions among Southern Nevada Homeless Veteran Respondents, 2009-2014
Help Hope Home – Southern Nevada’s Plan to End Homelessness

The Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition and its Committee on Homelessness are responsible for implementation and evaluation of Southern Nevada’s Help Hope Home ten year plan to end homelessness, introduced in August 2011. Coordination and management of the initiative, as well as the local Continuum of Care (CoC) process, is provided by the Regional Initiatives Office (RIO), the Southern Nevada collaborative applicant in charge of submitting a joint funding application on behalf of all applicants dedicated to serving the homeless in Clark County.

The Regional Initiatives Office is responsible for:

- Engaging in community strategic planning
- Overseeing the annual CoC application
- Conducting the biennial point-in-time Homeless Census Count
- Overseeing HMIS Implementation
- Coordinating with other systems of care
- Promoting access to mainstream programs
- Participating in the consolidated plan for Southern Nevada as a collaborative applicant

Some of the more difficult areas to penetrate as Southern Nevada continues to advance the goal of ending area homelessness include access to the spectrum of supportive services necessary to provide pathways out of homelessness. Strong partnerships with outside agencies have positively impacted issues such as access to food, vocational training, employment assistance, and public safety.

On the other hand, access to health, mental health, and substance abuse services - key components to providing the wellness an individual needs to maintain stability and sufficiency – remain elusive due to the inherent complexities built into the healthcare system itself, and even more specifically healthcare issues specific to Southern Nevada. It is anticipated that policy changes such as the implementation of the Affordable Care Act and Nevada’s acceptance of the Medicaid expansion will positively affect access to these services for homeless individuals; however, it will more than likely take some time to see the results of these measures.

Another factor that remains substantially difficult to impact in Southern Nevada is affordable housing. Despite the dramatic fluctuations in the housing market over the last several years, housing that became relatively more affordable was no longer so for individuals who lost their jobs and no longer had access to stable income. Urban planning and design recognizes the need for increased affordable housing, however, this component as well requires significant changes by policy makers to advance this critical component of Southern Nevada’s plan to end homelessness.
For many other services where partnerships are strong and public policy changes are not necessary to sustain meaningful impact, there is simply not enough supply to meet demand, whether the consumers of these services are at-risk of homelessness or not.\textsuperscript{xli}

In just five short years since the inception of Help Hope Home, Southern Nevada’s regional plan to end homelessness, a solid infrastructure has been built for a new system that doesn't manage homelessness, but is intent on ending it. Partnerships among service providers have developed from well-meaning working groups to a powerhouse of individuals implementing a broad range of solutions. The most substantial changes have originated in relation to planning for outcomes, where sophisticated partnerships within the CoC have created an evaluation system that is standardizing data inputs across multiple providers and allowing providers and the CoC to use the outputs of that data to make real-time decisions.

The HMIS system has been transformed from a required data entry tool mandated by HUD to a seamless interface that explores linkages between services, clients, and providers. The sophistication of the upgraded HMIS tool has the potential in the very near future to transform entire methods of service delivery. Already the technology has inspired the development of two new service delivery mechanisms, ranging from outreach workers using HMIS on their iPads to target services to the chronically homeless, to a new method of identification that expedites service delivery for regular users of the system. While impressive additions in and of themselves, these features have just been launched and represent only the infancy of what the new software platform is capable.\textsuperscript{xlii}

This coordinated system of partnerships has further leveraged their influence to focus on outcomes and accountability. Stakeholders across organizations have worked together to develop performance measures and are in the process of setting goals for those performance measures. A working group to monitor and audit program results was created to weed out ineffective programs or providers. Over the last five years, these partnerships have done the incredibly hard work of changing the system to move past the status quo and focus on results.\textsuperscript{xliii}

\textbf{Northern Nevada Community Profile}

Northern Nevada’s most recent point in time count was conducted on January 30, 2014. On this date, 769 total homeless individuals were counted in the Reno-Sparks area. Ninety-seven individuals were counted on the street (unsheltered), while 349 were counted in emergency shelters and 323 were counted in transitional housing.\textsuperscript{xliv}

The majority of individuals included in the count were over the age of 24 (85 percent). Of this group, 13 were identified as seniors (60 years or older). Another 8 percent were between the ages of 18 to 24. Approximately 7 percent (54 persons) were youths under the age of 18.\textsuperscript{xlv}

In terms of race and ethnicity, 72 percent were Caucasian, 11 percent were African American, and 9 percent were Hispanic/Latino. Small amounts of other populations were counted.
including: Asian (1 percent), American Indian (1 percent), Native Hawaiian (1 percent), and multi-racial persons (5 percent). \textsuperscript{xlviii}

Multi-year comparisons show that the number of homeless has fluctuated over the years in Washoe County. Specifically, the number of chronically homeless has decreased since 2012 and is expected to continue decreasing through 2016. Family homelessness, unlike chronic homelessness, has increased since 2012 and is projected to continue increasing through 2021. \textsuperscript{xlvii}

Veteran homelessness has decreased since 2012 and is projected to be nearly eliminated by 2016 in Northern Nevada. During this year’s point in time count, 119 veterans were counted. \textsuperscript{xlviii}

**Northern Nevada’s Plan to End Homelessness**

The Reno Area Alliance for the Homeless (RAAH) manages the Northern Nevada Continuum of Care. The mission of RAAH is to ensure a pathway that empowers people who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness to improve their lives. Representatives of RAAH consist of individuals from non-profits, law enforcement, social services, housing providers, faith-based organizations, governmental agencies and individuals to address issues of homelessness.

In 2013, the Mental Health and Developmental Services Division merged with the State Health Division to become the Division of Public and Behavioral Health (DPBH). After the completion of the merger, the DPBH conducted a gaps analysis report on the integrated public and behavioral health system of care in Nevada. The report identified the need to create regional strategic plans in Northern Nevada to address housing and behavioral health. \textsuperscript{xlix} As the Reno Area Alliance for the Homeless (RAAH) was already in the process of creating a strategic plan focused on area homelessness, the DPBH and the Reno Area Alliance for the Homeless are working together on the regional planning effort to avoid duplication of efforts.

The group has preliminarily identified the following focus areas:

1. **SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR)** - SOAR is a program that trains service providers to assist individuals in successfully completing applications for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).
2. **Coordinated Assessment and Centralized Intake** - A centralized or coordinated process designed to coordinate program participant intake, assessment, and provision of referrals.
3. **Housing** - Affordable housing in Nevada is limited, particularly in the northern area of the state.
4. **Wrap Around Services** - Wrap-around services, when combined with permanent housing, is widely recognized as the most successful approach to ending homelessness.
5. **Data and Information** – Data for Northern Nevada is not compiled or reported like Southern Nevada or the rural continuum. Reno, Sparks and Washoe County currently do not fund such this type of reporting information.
6. **Funding** – the group is still identifying the needs in this focus area

Within each focus area identified above, the group is also making sure to note special considerations for the subpopulations of youth, veterans and seniors. When comparing the efforts in Northern Nevada to those presented previously in Southern Nevada, stakeholders readily admitted that Northern Nevada and the rurals have not made nearly as much progress. Interviewees cited that in Northern Nevada, the mentality has only recently started to shift away from the emergency shelter approach to fully embracing the Housing First/Rapid Re-Housing approach. Stakeholders also noted that dedicated and paid staff, similar to the Regional Initiatives Office in Southern Nevada, do not exist in the north or in the rurals. Therefore, initiatives are run by an all-volunteer force that does as much as it can with the limited resources presented to them.

**Rural Nevada Community Profile**

Nevada is the seventh largest state in the nation by landmass, spanning approximately 110,000 square miles. Approximately 88 percent of Nevada’s 2.8 million residents live in only three counties -- Carson City, Clark County, and Washoe County. These three urban counties comprise a mere 13 percent of the state’s landmass. The remaining 12 percent of Nevada’s population reside in the 14 rural or frontier counties of the state, which have an average population of 2.5 persons per square mile. Several factors of Nevada’s geography contribute to the challenges in providing services to individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Nevada is a geographically rugged state, with 314 mountain ranges and mostly desert terrain. In addition, the U.S. Federal Government owns approximately 86 percent of the state’s land.

According to Social Entrepreneurs Inc., the Rural Nevada Continuum of Care (RNCoC) has successfully submitted applications for McKinney-Vento funding each year since 2002, resulting in net receipts of $5.75 million in funding for housing, supportive services and a Homeless Management Information System.

The RNCoC explains that the problem of rural homelessness is often complicated due to the geographic remoteness of these rural and frontier counties. Individuals are often ‘unseen’ and spread out in remote locations. While rural communities take pride in ‘taking care of their own,’ the hidden nature of rural homelessness means that the issue is most often viewed as an urban problem and overlooked in a rural context.

The RNCoC lists the largest barriers to addressing homelessness in rural counties as follows:

- **Transportation:** Large distances must be crossed to reach services that are few and far between. Limited public transportation options are available, if any exist at all.
- **Isolation:** Rural areas can be isolating due to the sheer enormity of land mass in rural or frontier counties with extremely sparse populations. People who are homeless often feel cut off from services that are available in the area.
• Shortage of Services: Few homeless service providers are available in most rural areas and mainstream services can be extremely difficult to access, as a small number of providers span large geographic areas.

The RNCoC describes these problems as overlapping. For example, the shortage of nearby services may mean that homeless individuals have to travel to a neighboring community to get the services they need, which can be difficult due to a lack of public transportation options. Similarly, geographic and linguistic/cultural isolation of homeless individuals in a community may exacerbate the invisibility of the population. iv

The graph below shows a small decrease in the number of homeless individuals living on the streets in rural Nevada over the last eight years.

Figure 8. Unsheltered Street Count of Homeless Individuals, Rural Nevada, 2005-2013 lvii

The RNCoC conducted its most recent rural point-in-time (PIT) street count on January 24, 2013. The report counted 180 total individuals living on the street. lviii The majority of these individuals were persons over the age of 24 (93 percent) and 5 percent were between the ages of 18 to 24. In addition to the 180 individuals living on the street, there were 3 families living on the street that day. lviii Additional subpopulation details of these 180 rural homeless individuals are depicted below.
In addition to homeless individuals living on the street, the PIT count also includes individuals receiving homeless services in an emergency shelter or transitional housing. The 2013 PIT Count revealed 154 persons in emergency or transitional housing, and 85 individuals staying in Emergency Shelters. An additional 69 were in Transitional Housing. The chart below shows the various subpopulations of rural homeless individuals served by providers during the PIT count.

**Figure 9. Homeless Individuals, Rural Nevada, 2013**

- Adult Male: 149
- Seniors (60+): 83
- Adult Female: 31
- Chronically Homeless Males: 19
- Veterans: 3
- Chronically Homeless Females: 3
- Minor (0-17): 0

**Figure 10. Rural Subpopulations in Emergency Shelters and Transitional Housing, 2013**

- Persons over 24: 40%
- Domestic Violence: 18%
- Chronically Homeless Individuals: 13%
- Chronic Substance Abuse: 8%
- Severely Mentally Ill: 8%
- Persons 18-24: 6%
- Veterans: 5%
- HIV/AIDS: 1%
- Chronically Homeless Families: 1%
- Youth: 0%
### Figure 11. Rural County Homeless Population Breakdowns

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Carson City</th>
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<tr>
<td>Homeless individuals</td>
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<td>77</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>Chronically homeless families</td>
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<td>N/D</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>N/D</td>
<td>N/D</td>
<td>N/D</td>
<td>N/D</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                  | Churchill County |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |
|                  | 2006          | 2007          | 2008          | 2009          | 2010          | 2011          | 2012          | 2013          |               |
| Homeless individuals | 9           | n14           | 0             | 9             | 3             | 7             | N/D           | 7             |               |
| Chronically homeless individuals | N/D         | 0             | 0             | 2             | 3             | 0             | N/D           | 0             |               |
| Chronically homeless families | N/D         | N/D           | N/D           | N/D           | N/D           | 0             | N/D           | 0             |               |
| Homeless veterans | N/D          | N/D           | N/D           | N/D           | N/D           | 1             | N/D           | 0             |               |

<p>|                  | Douglas County |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |
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Note: Esmeralda, Eureka, Lander, Pershing, Storey and White Pine counties have no data or no homeless. N/D stands for no data available.
STATEWIDE STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Strategic Progress conducted 30 interviews with stakeholders and community leaders across Nevada that are knowledgeable about the issues of homelessness, particularly as it relates to homeless veterans. Interviews were intended to informally survey local experts about their main challenges, concerns and assets related to the issue of homelessness throughout the state of Nevada in preparation for a statewide convening in Las Vegas on November 6, 2014. Qualitative questions were administered orally during one-on-one and small group in-person and phone interviews; a formal written survey was not distributed, and results were not quantified.

Interviewees identified the following as major issues in terms of addressing veteran homelessness:

Policy Barriers

- **Eligibility**: Not all veterans are eligible for VA benefits, and even if they are, program eligibility requirements vary significantly.
  
  *Other than Honorable Discharges (OTH)*: Funding for veteran homeless grants often does not cover services for veterans who have not been honorably discharged. Without an honorable discharge designation, providers are unable to bring the veterans in to provide services. Therefore, there is a significant need to assist many veterans in upgrading their discharge status (or designation). Going through that process is time consuming and very difficult for a veteran who is at risk, ill, or homeless.

  There are supports, and supportive services, for homeless veterans with OTH status through some grant and per diem programs, and we need to make sure that continues. However, if an OTH homeless veteran is served in a program with other funding, they cannot receive their medical services through the VA, which poses additional challenges. Interviewees argued that we need to advocate for increased access to the programs the VA has to offer for non-eligible veterans.

  In addition, National Guard members are often not eligible for medical benefits. When the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program came out, a ruling was made that as long as veterans are not dishonorably discharged, providers could serve them. This was the gap filler for many programs, but at one point the VA took this away. The ruling has since been retracted, and providers can now serve this population again. This should be maintained, if possible.
Identification & Documentation: It is a challenge for homeless veterans who are trying to get a driver’s license, identification card, or even a social security card. It not only takes time and money, but there is also a long waiting period if the veteran does not have the proper identification going in the first time. Without the essential identification or documentation, veterans end up in a holding pattern, which causes a delay in accessing benefits and services.

There is a promising model, though. A local pastor in Southern Nevada has an agreement with the DMV that if a homeless veteran has an ID card from jail, it can be exchanged for a Nevada ID card. If the DMV would expand on this agreement, we could help veterans get an ID since we have their picture and military service information.

• One Night: In order for a veteran to access the HUD program, they had to have experienced homelessness before or been homeless for at least one night. In addition, HUD programs do not allow providers to serve veterans if they are coming out of jail. If a veteran leaves jail and that same night goes to a homeless shelter, he/she will not be allowed to stay. Unfortunately, providers have to say, “we will have to make you homeless for tonight so we can serve you tomorrow.” Consequently, there is a chance of losing that veteran. This is not an ideal way to prevent at-risk veterans from cycling into worse conditions on the streets.

• Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS): VA staff are unable to access HMIS because they do not have the permissions required, which greatly hinders the sharing of client information. Interviewees argue that the VA and HMIS systems need to interface to be able to improve outcomes for homeless veterans. They need to deal with HIPPA and FERPA so they can simplify and align social service delivery processes in order to get veterans housed, trained and employed. Is it possible to work out a system that talks to all of their systems?

• Set Aside Tax Credit Program: How should the state be more involved? Can we establish a set aside on the low-income housing tax credit program? We could design one for units that serve homeless vets. There is a program model in Arizona where an Administrator successfully prioritized veteran’s homelessness issues and set up policies within their tax credit program to achieve their stated outcomes.

• Case Backlogs / Waiting Times: Case backlogs at Veterans Administration Medical Centers (VAMC) cause difficulties in service delivery. For instance, a change in discharge status might be needed before a veteran is eligible for the Veterans Homeless Prevention Demonstration (VHPD) Program, or a veteran may be able to become self-sustaining if his or her disability status is changed. However, VHPD assistance might not last long enough to bridge the period of waiting for a VA decision.

• Coordinated Intake: Through the coordinated intake process, providers are now using a vulnerability index score. This assessment is then automatically generated by HMIS. However, because the VA and HMIS systems do not interface and staff on either side of the
system do not have access to the data, VA staff has to enter the assessment information manually into their system. In addition, the VA cannot see the waitlist on the HMIS side, and they cannot see the information that lists where the veterans have already been served and what services have been given. Theoretically, the veterans intake system is supposed to be seamless. Because the systems are disconnected, this doesn’t work. With coordinated intake, the VA is being the centralized referral system to all agencies but they can’t see the data from the agencies in HMIS.

- **Policy Coordination:** When policy staff is writing these policies, they are not actually coordinating with providers on the ground. Staff from the VA, medical and mental health professionals, elected officials, veterans advocates, providers, North, South, rural, housing, service groups, drug and alcohol, and the Federal Government are needed to collaborate around strategic policy changes at the state and local levels.

### Lack of Permanent Affordable Housing

- A majority of the interviewees across the state, including those in urban and rural Nevada, stated that the lack of permanent housing is the biggest problem facing them. They have a huge issue with finding one- and two-bedroom apartments and homes for homeless veterans. Because the veterans have subsidized housing, they often do not have money for the deposits, and providers cannot find a house that would qualify. This situation is critical in some locations, like Elko, where housing is already a challenge. With the centralized intake process, providers can access a voucher for someone in a couple of weeks, but finding a house in that timeframe that meets the standards is a challenge.
- A statewide issue is the lack of housing nonprofits that can fill this need. The funding mechanism for any type of affordable housing is slim to none. The low income tax credit program is about the only funding source around.
- We need more contracts with community providers in the rural areas for emergency and transitional housing. For example, in Elko there are a number of landlords who do not like renting to the clients of homeless veteran providers because they have enough clients and tenants without this source of income. In Elko and Winnemucca, there is a lack of available housing even if they wanted to place someone. In addition, it has been a challenge in Hawthorne to find landlords that would take a voucher in a place that would pass inspection.
- One of the biggest barriers is the lack of permanent supportive housing. There are two issues: 1) the allocation plan for the tax credit program. Is it equitable, should it be reviewed? All the tax credit allocation typically stays in Southern Nevada. Only one project is allocated for Washoe and one small bit for the rural areas. If that is the main mechanism for the projects, this puts a damper on progress. 2) The housing authority and their set asides for their voucher programs. They have the ability to set aside up to 10 percent for their vouchers and set aside preferences for homeless people. The vouchers could be an
incentive to develop affordable housing. This is also an incentive to the owner, since it is income and they are attached to the property. This should be maximized.

- Currently, the vouchers are 100 percent utilized, and are housing choice vouchers. Under the tenant-based model, the voucher stays with the tenant. But, there is an opportunity to project base some of those and leverage them to help develop and build more permanent supportive or permanent housing in the community and to attract more HOME or other dollars.

**Specialty Medical Services**

- Due to backlogs in the VA medical process, some veterans are still going to UNLV to get their dental work done. Interestingly, living in a homeless program expedites some services.

- There are often gaps in the service continuum for veterans who are ill and unable to live alone, but who do not qualify for assisted living or skilled nursing. For example, one provider had a wheelchair bound, 70-plus year old veteran dropped off at her door who was not ambulatory but paralyzed on his right side, a brittle diabetic with a history of mental illness, alcohol issues and kidney disease. He was homeless and could not live alone, but the provider had nowhere to send or place him. Due to his extra needs, he could not go to a shelter. Therefore, in order to get him to a safe place, they had to do an involuntary admission in a psychiatric ward since there were some mental health features. This is not acceptable. Emergency short-term options are needed for veterans who are homeless with medical needs while providers work on the funding and approval for long-term options.

- The requirement for services or placement with HUD is that one must live independently, however, the kind of funding that provides for the additional supports to enable this does not exist. In the example given above, it was not just about the housing. The provider wanted to emphasize that this person needed medically supportive housing. “His level of care trumps homelessness.”

- How do we get placement on an emergency basis where they are safe since someone like this is not safe in a shelter? Right now providers have to tell them to go half a mile down the road in their wheelchair and wish them good luck. For the medically involved, this is a dangerous and costly situation.

- The VA does not provide nursing home care unless a veteran has a service-connected disability, has a combined disability rating of 70 percent or higher, has a disability rating of at least 60 percent and is deemed unemployable or has been rated permanently or totally disabled. So what happens to those that are lost in the middle of this system?

- Interviewees said this is our opportunity to shift the conversation a little bit. If people are going to continue to say that veterans who can no longer take care of themselves and who are aging out of their current care giving arrangement are therefore now homeless, we have really messed up. Currently, everything about homeless funding and services is completely dependent upon a person being able to care for himself/herself, and this is problematic.
• Providers really need a place to care for clients with greater medical needs. An apartment with a social worker managing their minimal needs is not getting it done. We need to get in front of this because this category of veterans is going to explode exponentially in the coming years.

• Even at critical provider organizations that have shelter programs, homeless veterans have to leave during the day. These veterans are incredibly vulnerable people. The first in line for these shelters every day are veterans and other homeless who have physical challenges because they want to try to get the lower bunk beds since they cannot climb up to the top bunk. They can manage to be somewhat independent so they can still access the shelter. Those in wheelchairs can take their wheelchairs into the shelter, but they have to be able to independently take a shower and get their own meal. However, if they have a greater level of need, where are they to go?

• In order to go to a skilled nursing home, those that have higher levels of need have to be referred through doctors and social workers and have their funding in order. This is a long process that doesn’t guarantee immediate placement. Even if the nursing home eventually accepts the veteran, the gap in time is problematic. The county hospital is the facility most likely to take veterans with higher levels of need. However, even the hospitals struggle with this because they do not know how long they will have to care for the veteran. Once admitted the hospital, there may be other complications that cause additional problems such as the veteran may be from another state or they have no ID.

• In order to solve this, communities need emergency skilled nursing shelters. This type of solution would build our capacity, and we would need to build the inventory of skilled nursing and assisted living options at the same time.

• Another challenge identified by interviewees across the state was the need for increased access to and funding for mental health services. Much of the chronically homeless population is untreated mentally ill. Many interviewees stated that it is unconscionable to have so many people with untreated mental health issues at the ER. It is not only costly but also the wrong treatment setting for these clients. You can’t talk about homelessness without talking about mental health.

• In addition to the extremely medically fragile and the mentally ill, according to some people, the largest population of veterans is those that end up making about a $1,000 a month. That is the cutoff for them to live alone, and they need more truly affordable housing (a place to rent for $400 or less a month). This is not possible in the majority of communities across Nevada for a decent place to live. There are few places for seniors that cost about that, but most places that would qualify are between $500-$600 per month. Half of the $1,000 goes to rent, and the remainder is not enough on which to live, even if the veteran receives benefits from the VA, SSI or SSD.

• Providers across the state are seeing a lot of veterans who need increased medical and mental health support to be self-sufficient.
• The VA faces severe shortages in mental health care professionals and long backlogs for accessing disability benefits, leaving many veterans vulnerable.

• There is currently a need for staff to be better trained and educated and more resources to increase the capacity of VHPD sites—and future veterans’ homeless assistance efforts—to cope with the consequences and address the complex issues of trauma and brain injury.

• In terms of benefits processing time, it could take approximately 9 months for veterans’ benefits to pay for a nursing home. In addition, the care and attendance payments could take many, many months. How can we speed up the processing of these types of payments?

• One interviewee suggested that having a simplified matrix of benefits would be beneficial for homeless veterans. Relying on other resources to sort out benefits and referrals is time consuming. How can providers simplify and advocate for the efficiency of this process?

Data Challenges – Accuracy and Sharing of Data

• Interviewees stated that they did not feel that they get good numbers around veteran homelessness for the rural areas. If they could justify a larger gap in the rural areas, they could make the case for more resources.

• Interviewees stated they feel like the data for Reno and Clark County is pretty good.

• North: One interviewee stated that the point in time count does not really do a good job counting the veterans, but they are often able to separate that number in the HMIS tool. In order to do the count, they have to wake people up, and in the past weren’t even asking. It is a blunt tool, but it is the best method we have right now.

• The data issue is getting better. They have made a real effort in Washoe County to state that HMIS is going to be the system for centralized intake and coordinated assessment. With that, everyone is really looking to work with HMIS and deal with it. Because of the other service providers that are also serving veterans, that will be an improvement, but it is still somewhat of an issue.

• The data is only as good as the point in time count. This year they did a second count in Northern Nevada because they felt the January count was not as good. Reno Area Alliance for the Homeless (RAAH) did another count this past June, and it was not as in depth as the formal point in time count. They are now issuing cards to homeless people, and they hope this will be a benefit. This is part of the centralized intake, and they can use it wherever they go.

• South: The data seems fairly good, but some interviewees argued that data should be better shared to drive decision-making.

Communication and Collaboration

• Communication across regions and across the state is critical. Interviewees stated that the most effective way to build a communication infrastructure is to leverage and network
existing committees since everyone is already stretched thin and no one wants to create new mechanisms.

- There is no way anyone can do this work alone—a sentiment that was widely felt across all interviews.
- One interviewee stated that the fact that the VA is not represented on the Statewide Interagency Council is kind of odd. This needs to be addressed.
- No matter what, having communication with the state around what is happening at the local and regional level is critical. Ideally, the state would act as an intermediary with the Federal Government and also work to leverage state assets to solve problems. The Nevada Department of Veterans Services has not been engaged in the homeless veteran issue at a significant level over the years.
- Even though the coordinated intake process is an advance and the CoCs do communicate across the state relatively well, there are still communication issues as they relate to coming together as a group to advocate for policy changes, to apply for statewide grants, to work to develop new sources of funding and new funding mechanisms, and to share what is working and not working in different communities.
- They get a veteran at the coordinated intake hub, and if this veteran doesn’t fit the criteria, and also doesn’t sign consent for them to release info to the county, it does a disservice to the client who has to now go to the County to do it all again.
- The critical need is to understand what is available and how people are working together. They don’t communicate. For example, one provider in Reno does not know what the VA clinic in Fallon doing, even though they are fairly close geographically. So even though there are communication mechanisms, sometimes they are still not functioning at an optimal level.
- Some interviewees stated that they would like to see more leadership from the VA on this issue, in addition to the Nevada Department of Veterans Services. These groups should be leading and stepping into convening roles, not just attending community meetings.
- In both Reno and Las Vegas, interviewees identified stress and challenges between the City and the County, even when both were strong players or actively involved in service delivery. In both regions, this was identified as something that needs to be continually worked on in order to strengthen and improve outcomes, to leverage existing resources, and to build strong systems that break down barriers.
- One local government interviewee from the South stated that they do not communicate with the North or the rural areas on barriers or solutions. They are looking to the Interagency Council on Homelessness to be able to feed some of their main issues up to the state level.
- One Southern interviewee has seen progress in the South over the past few years. They stated that the system used to be based on territorial motivations, where their predecessors never sat in a room together and had a conversation among four different agencies about how to integrate and align services. “We would have thrown each other
under the bus.” Now, they talk at the staff level, within jurisdictions. What happens at the city level impacts the other cities. Due to this fact, they learned that they have to communicate and coordinate efforts.

- One interviewee stated there is so much activity around the veterans space that there appears at times that the left hand doesn’t know what the right hand is doing. For example, there is the Mayors’ Challenge, and the National League of Cities, and the 25 Cities Initiatives, the Statewide Interagency Council, and others. How can we align all our efforts? How can we ensure we are leveraging all that we have?

- The Committee on Homelessness (COH) is still a venue, and there are some things happening with the Hearth Act to strengthen it. But this doesn’t need to be the one method to communicate, even though this is what most interviewees identified as the main way they communicate, especially outside of their jurisdiction.

- One interviewee stated that in the South, the COH is going to become the Continuum of Care Board. They argued that the COH structure worked for 2007 and 2008, but it now needs to change. Many stated that the format of going to a committee and hearing report outs is not an active enough format that is producing solutions, and needs to change.

- In the North, interviewees stated that RAAH is the closest equivalent to the COH in the South. It is a nascent group that has done well with seeking grants, but is not yet in a true leadership position. However, they are making progress.

- A number of interviewees stated that they were requested to be part of the Nevada Department of Veterans Services Green Zone Initiative. They are receptive as it is meant to improve the outcomes of veterans across Nevada, but they don’t know what that really means. They stated that they don’t need or want to start another committee since they have what they need for veterans. They are looking for leadership from the state on this issue.

- In terms of structure, in the North, the City of Sparks, Reno and Washoe County previously had a consortium. They now come to the continuum of care meetings. RAAH is the Continuum of Care that is now working to lead on this issue. A subcommittee of RAAH that is working like an executive board is going through the strategic planning process for the region. This is seen as positive.

- In the rural areas, community providers tend to meet in community groups that are broader than just homelessness-focused groups. Interviewees stated they work closely together and communicate frequently. They also participate in the Balance of State CoC process.

Trends

- Over the last few years, there has been a strong emphasis on the street-level chronically homeless. Communities have been trying to create barrier-free ways for them to access any of the community programs. Providers are even taking their grant and per diem programs and trying to do more harm reduction and not requiring people to be sober and stable on meds to get into housing. Providers are targeting people sleeping in places not meant for human habitation.
• Communities are also focusing on tracking outcomes around veteran and homeless employment, making sure that all the clients in their contract programs who are not disabled have access to employment programs and are employed at exit.
• In the South, providers are seeing a big influx in a transient population coming to Las Vegas. They are seeing that 22-23 percent are veterans who have moved to Las Vegas in the last 90 days thinking that they will find a job and end up homeless instead. They need transportation, work cards, deposits, etc. and end up in trouble. This growing influx makes it a challenge to plan for ending homelessness.

NEVADA VETERAN HOMELESSNESS CONVENING- November 6, 2014

Facilitation Model
The Nevada Statewide Veteran Homelessness Summit was held on November 6th at the Historic Fifth Street School in downtown Las Vegas. The site was provided by the City of Las Vegas, with a catered breakfast provided by the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco and the City of Las Vegas, and time included for networking. The Nevada Department of Veteran Services (NDVS), in partnership with the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco and the Nevada Community Foundation, sponsored the event.

The Summit was facilitated based on the WildWorks™ model, which has been used with hundreds of organizations worldwide, including Fortune 500 companies, large non-profit organizations and governmental agencies in order to engage participants in an interactive, collaborative manner and identify elements upon which we can build a shared change agenda in a short amount of time (half-day summit format).

WildWorks is centered on a methodology called Results based Conversations RbC™, which engages all participants in the process and ensures that everyone has an opportunity to speak into the planning process, have an opportunity to participate, share and weigh-in -- to contribute and build the model for moving forward.

This engagement style was particularly important for the Nevada Department of Veterans Services (NDVS) when planning this conference because NDVS leadership wanted to understand, from the diverse participants attending the summit, what barriers and opportunities exist in the veteran homelessness space. NDVS thought that the best way to get the highest quality input was to have an active, engaging and participatory process whereby each individual was able to contribute and stimulate each other with their ideas.

The group moved through the morning with activities that allowed an incredible amount of ideas to be generated, shared and processed.
SUMMIT PROCEEDINGS
The Summit kicked off with a warm welcome by Joselyn Cousins, Regional Manager, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco. Ms. Cousins informed that this Summit was the brainchild of Colonel (U.S. Army, Retired) Katherine (Kat) Miller, Director of the NDVS, in recognition of the need to get stakeholders together to seek solutions to the grave issue of Veteran Homelessness in our State. Ms. Cousins then introduced Director Miller.

Director Miller introduced the goals of the Summit, which were to identify the challenges facing this population, to bring stakeholders together to share assets and information, and to leverage the NDVS as an asset in this work, thereby advancing change.

The Summit proceeded with a Panel discussion facilitated by Joselyn Cousins. The members of the panel included:

Ellen Richardson Adams
Outpatient Administrator for Southern Nevada Adult Mental Health Services

Tim Burch
Director, Clark County Department of Social Service

Heather DeSart
Deputy Executive Director, Workforce Connections

Dr. Cynthia Dodge
Clinical Psychologist
Community Resource and Referral Center (CRRC) Program Manager

Elizabeth Pope
Supervisor, Health Care for Homeless Veterans
VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System

Tony Ramirez
Reno Field Office Director, HUD

Marka Turner
Director of Rental and Housing Programs
Nevada Rural Housing Authority

The goal of the 40-minute panel was to bring awareness to the number of critical issues surrounding veteran homelessness and to lay the groundwork for the following two-hour interactive small group portion of the convening.

Moderator Joselyn Cousins asked the group questions around the following key areas, and the panelists discussed the issues from the policy, program and practice levels:
- Current status of veteran homelessness
- Policy constraints and barriers
- Best practices, replicating and scaling/what works
- Critical partnerships and collaborations/communication
- Resource needs and deficits
- Vision of the future
Summary of Input from the Panel
A summary of the panel presentation is as follows:

**Current status of veteran homelessness** - We are four years into the Veterans Administration’s five-year Plan to End Veteran Homelessness and the VA has poured in resources to the Housing First Model. There is an opportunity to help providers access resources, e.g., substance abuse assistance and moving veterans into permanent housing more quickly and to pool resources, especially in the rural regions of the State. Currently, there are 1,369 homeless veterans in Nevada, which is a staggering increase with an influx seen due in part to the increase of transience. For example, 25 percent of the most chronic and most vulnerable just moved here within the last 90 days. We need to look for solutions not only in our own back yard but we also need to partner with bordering states.

**Policy constraints and barriers** - The current barriers reported included getting veterans housed due to lack of documentation, services for the dishonorably discharged, mental health services, supportive employment, supportive education, complications in getting services to the rural regions, the need to move people out of supportive housing, the need for affordable housing, the gap for those who are not eligible for VA services, and a lack of coordination among systems.

**Best practices, replicating and scaling/what works** - Some examples of models to explore further included Salt Lake City (very successful in targeting vouchers through a centralized intake, completing assessments, getting vets quickly housed, capturing vets who are not qualified for VASH) and Project H3 Vets in Phoenix (for identifying the most vulnerable veterans, providing navigators to help them through the system and the Bridge to Housing model, which allowed time for the veterans to get off the street). Housing First and Centralized Intake are best practices that have been successful. The 25 Cities Initiative has led to other new ideas, e.g., better coordination of outreach teams.

**Critical partnerships and collaborations/communication** - The Interagency Council is a good start. We need to get more businesses on board and we need to engage more of our faith-based community. We are always looking for agencies that can provide emergency housing.

**Resource needs and deficits** - We need creative ways of funding and we need to better understand how successful, neighboring states and communities are funded. We need to get philanthropic funders and businesses involved in order to leverage private investments in solving this problem.

**Vision of the future** - The panel had some clear specific ideas about what a future vision for the issue of Homeless Veterans in Nevada should include:
- Reducing homelessness in the rural regions
- Systems that allow veterans to get the resources they need
- Person-centered planning
- Building a system that has functional zero capacity
- More flexible funding
- Legislation that is written to include individuals
- Cultural environments in our agencies that will engage people who have not been agency-involved for decades
- Housing for medically compromised clients
- Family emergency housing
- Housing with fewer barriers

Outcomes of Small Group Interactive Sessions
The purpose of the small working group portion of the Summit was to surface issues and challenges at the core of the problem at the key informant and expert level – the issues with which those in the “trenches” are struggling or for which have solutions to offer. Small groups allow for in-depth conversation about detailed problems and barriers and to explore and uncover creative solutions that might not be offered in the larger group format. The small group topics were developed in order to compartmentalize the large topic – Veteran Homelessness – into workable content areas into which participants could lend their expertise and discuss priority areas of action and focus for the project moving forward. The predetermined small group topics were:
  - Partnerships and Collaborations
  - Medical, Dental, and Mental Health
  - Housing
  - Data and Technology
  - Employment and Education
  - Policy

The Summit participants chose the small group that interested them most and/or the topic in which they felt they had the most expertise. This self-selection process allowed for the passion, expertise, and focus of participants to benefit each topic, to produce content that was specific enough to help drive the Nevada Department of Veterans Services to change the agenda for 2015, and advance statewide action around veteran homelessness.

Each group was tasked with working through the following in their small groups:
  - Key factors to determine success
Necessary activities to achieve success

Resources and budget items available or needed

Desired outcomes

After completing the small group discussions and writing their ideas on large white boards, the groups then reported on their work. The results were far-reaching, comprehensive, and specific enough to allow the NDVS to advance a change agenda and strategy at the State level to impact the problem of Veteran Homelessness in our State.

Medical, Dental, and Mental Health Services

Key Success Factors

- Access to and availability of services is critical
- The issue of documentation needs to be addressed -- people should have the documentation they need to access services
- Safe and sustainable housing must be available and accessible
- Transportation needs to be factored in and solved

Activities

- Determine how to help veterans obtain documents:
  - Birth Certificates
  - Social Security cards
  - DD-214s
  - Identification cards
- Create mobile outreach with follow up for mental health services when identified
- Develop a method for connecting services immediately, i.e., V.A. > DOD > State

Resources / Budget

- Funding streams for obtaining documentation
- Funding for Case management to navigate systems
- Higher levels of care for mental health and substance abuse
- More access for dental resources
- Collaboration with criminal justice system to find funding for vets that need these services
Outcomes
- A sliding fee scale or tiered system for medical, dental and mental health services
- An integrated health system
- Effective interagency communication and collaboration between state and federal agencies
- Nevada will have a medical home for veterans
- A separated treatment system for high risk/high need and low risk/low need veterans will exist

Housing
Key Success Factors
- HMIS used by all agencies to keep better track of clients
- Decrease the bottleneck at the referral stage
- The system for transitioning from temporary housing into permanent housing needs attention
- Affordable housing is available and accessible
- Rural areas need more affordable housing and emergency housing
- Location of services to reach those who need them

Activities
- Collaborate with businesses providing temporary housing
- Increase partnerships and collaborations
- Increase outreach into the homeless community, e.g., at stand downs
- Develop “shallow” rental assistance process, e.g., when only a small amount is necessary to prevent homelessness
- Standardize definitions and criteria of HUD Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH)
- Address gap in resources for National Guard, single veterans, etc. (approximately 15% are not eligible for services)
- Lower barriers (e.g., families, pets, substance abuse issues) for emergency housing

Resources / Budget
- Capital funding
- Need statewide dollar figures
• The Nevada Housing Division housing locator (inventory of vacancies, need, special housing needs, etc.) needs to be populated.

Outcomes
• A Public Relations Campaign that is informational about:
  o The housing programs available for veterans
  o Resources and funding that is available
  o Housing availability

• A strategic plan to identify:
  o A statewide goal
  o Legislative earmarks for funding
  o Data to inform the pursuit of business and government funding
  o Casino and gaming industry involvement

• A campaign developed using the “Invisible People” model

Policy
Key Success Factors
• Simplicity in the system
• Efficiency in the system
• An understanding that policy is not all about legislation – we must examine internal policies
• Flexibility in the system
• Adaptability of the system

Activities
• Re-examine policy on discharges
• Push VASH directly to providers and remove barriers
• Drive resources toward the need
  o Examine housing location and programs
• Solicit local philanthropic match for projects around homelessness and require outcomes
• Decrease the disconnects between federal, state, and local policies
• Make block grants flexible for local control
• Examine scattered-site versus project-based housing
• Increase philanthropy
• Remove barriers and red tape
• Mutual definitions and single audits (agencies coordinate to remove the burden on providers)
• Ascertain highest and best use of land, e.g., match the existing needs of the community with the available land in that community
• Create immediate access and flexibility

Resources / Budget
• Resource and budget map -- collate multiple reports
• Interagency Council on Homelessness
• Foster inclusive dialogue (e.g., PTSD cuts across veteran and non veteran populations) to make use of resources that are available

Outcomes
• Less red tape
• Increased flexibility
• Policies will reflect current needs and paradigms
• Increased community buy-in

Data and Technology
Key Success Factors
• All service providers have access to HMIS
• End users need to be involved in the software design
• When updates occur, ensure existing data is kept and migrated into new system
• Systems to “talk” to each other (e.g., DOD, V.A., etc.)
• Ability to get through the V.A. firewall
• Use of tablets in outreach / for point in time interaction
Activities / Issues
- Develop “Passport” – card which has HMIS info loaded on and “swipes” transfers automatically
- Use traffic signs to advertise services
- Use billboards to advertise services
- Use public service announcements
- Improve technology for outreach, e.g., tablets
- Develop broad-based information campaign so the community better understands veteran homelessness
- Create homeless service digital ‘app’
- Get technology into the hands of veterans
- Offer technology training for veterans
- Connect veteran volunteers to service agencies that can use them through a database

Resources / Budget
- State road signs – Department of Transportation
- Public Broadcasting System
- Marketing campaign funding
- Expand HelpHopeHome.org
- Partnership with Switch

Outcomes
- Reports back to users in addition to funders
- A more accurate count of homeless veterans
- Data is shared and accessible to all stakeholders
- Change of address will be updated through/with the V.A.

Employment and Education
Key Success Factors
- Housing
- Documents
- Partnerships, including employer partnerships
- Access
- Clothing
- Child care

**Activities / Issues**
- Create resume writing assistance specifically for federal/government jobs
- Develop workshops for employment and education assistance
- Make substance and behavioral counseling available
- Develop job fairs that incorporate hiring

**Resources / Budget**
- Job Connect
- One Stops
- Workforce Connections
- U.S. Vets
- Federal Government
- Goodwill
- Catholic Charities of Southern Nevada

**Outcomes**
- Vets will have access to education
- Vets will have access to employment opportunities and career ladders
- Vets will have the abilities and tools to sustain employment
- Vets will have the tools to earn livable wages and livable wage opportunities will be available to veterans

**Partnerships and Collaborations**

**Key Success Factors**
- The key stakeholders (those with a vested interest) are identified
- A centralized web portal is developed
- Resources to fill gaps are defined
• Communication between stakeholders is improved
• Duplication of providers is decreased
• One Central Resource Center is developed, accessible for all vets
• Better collaboration & communication within and between federal departments is developed
• A matrix of funding and services is created and a single lead/contact is agreed upon

Activities
• Increase networking and communication to better understand what we all do
• Identify what is been done with the Nevada Department of Business and Industry Website and determine how to enhance in order to best assist veterans
• Enhance the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and build on other coordinated assessment systems
• Hold career fairs that include private business owners
  o Increase hiring veterans
  o Include advocacy and education

Resources / Budget
• Private business is needed as part of the solution
• A dedicated funding source (e.g., a tax or a lottery)
• Diversified funding for the services, e.g., not 100% grant funded
• Military funding
• Local donated land for facilities

Outcomes
• Better Communication between partners, collaborators, providers, state and federal departments, etc.
• Better knowledge across the board about services available
• Better service provision through
  o Decreased gaps and/or duplication
  o Increased quality
• Better data through and enhanced centralized data system
- Increased permanent housing
- Increased access to services that lead to a better quality of life for veterans

MOVING FORWARD - NEXT STEPS

The Nevada Department of Veterans Services is moving forward with a 2015 Veteran Homelessness Veteran Initiative to drive action at the state level around this issue. The input from the November 6, 2014 convening was a catalyst for this agenda, and the input obtained from participants in the Summit, and the interviews conducted in advance of the Summit, as well as our own research, will form the platform on which the Initiative will be built and designed.

The Nevada Department of Veterans Services will focus on the following three key strategies over 2015:

1. **Strategic Change Agenda** – Design a Strategic Change Agenda to build upon the existing system of services available to homeless veterans; prioritize key goals and actions for NDVS to focus on over the next 24 months; identify best practices for implementing systems change and removing barriers impacting homeless veterans services, building off the community input given to NDVS at the November 6, 2014 event; vet change agenda amongst stakeholders at the system, policy and advocacy levels; obtain buy-in and develop strategic alliances with stakeholders at all levels.

2. **Statewide Communication, Convening and Engagement** - Engage statewide “taskforce” to address the policy, program and practice barriers identified in the November 6, 2014 convening. Leverage this group, and other key relationships developed during the 2 month interview process in Phase One to advance the change agenda and to continue to feed information and data to the Interagency Council, key decision makers, local government, philanthropic and federal partners who can make changes in key areas that currently present barriers to progress. Establish communication and feedback loop through survey of all conference attendees, invitation to join the Green Zone Network, to leverage the digital platform to engage stakeholders in ongoing discussions and Department led activities.

3. **Funding and Leverage Opportunity Analysis** - identify public and private funding streams that support homeless policy, program and practice change, leverage within existing programs, and what investments will produce the most effective and efficient outcomes. Use the NDVS to convene statewide partners to apply for federal grants, in partnership with other State and local government departments and community based non profits. Use the data from the NDVS Homeless Veteran Landscape Analysis Report
to illustrate the compelling need to identify and connect existing resources, address
gaps in the continuum of care, and sustain a strong veterans service system for the
future. Work with the Nevada Community Foundation, Federal Reserve Bank of San
Francisco, and other private partners to engage private investors in funding elements of
the change agenda.

Using the expertise and insight of the elected officials, leaders, community providers,
stakeholders and veterans who attended the conference, we will design and mobilize around a
community driven Change Agenda to ensure that we are responsive to locally identified needs.
By anchoring our planning and activities in both national and local research we will ensure that
we are maximizing the potential for impact in all that we do.

Over the next year, we will be reaching out to Summit participants, and engaging the statewide
veteran homelessness community in an ongoing dialogue about how the NDVS can leverage its
assets to help advance the good work already happening in communities across Nevada to
address this issue.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Strategic Progress, LLC is a Nevada based company specializing in regional planning, public
policy research and advocacy, federal and private grant development, fundraising and strategic
positioning of large scale initiatives.

Cyndy Ortiz Gustafson, Strategic Progress founder and CEO, has a MA in Political Science and
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scale public policy initiatives. She directed the research and writing of this project.

The lead research consultant and writer on this project is Jennifer Ouellette. Ms. Ouellette has
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research and analytics firms such as Applied Analysis, PricewaterhouseCoopers, and Econ One
Research. She has partnered with Strategic Progress on several statewide public policy research
projects, and presented those findings to various groups and entities across Nevada.

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