

House Veterans, Military and Homeland Security Committee

By Gregg Burden

Executive Director, Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs

January 17, 2011

Thank you for the opportunity to brief the House Veterans, Military and Homeland Security Committee. I am Gregg Burden, Executive Director of the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs. Attending with me today are Wayne Bollig, Veteran Services Director, and Marshall Kennedy, Chief Fiscal Officer.

The mission of the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs (KCVA) is to serve Kansas veterans, survivors, and their dependents with dignity and compassion. The KCVA is a principal advocate in ensuring that they receive information, advice, direction, and assistance through the coordination of programs and services on state and federal benefits: medical care, benefits, social support, and lasting memorials in recognition of their service to Kansas and the nation.

The KCVA provides services to include long-term nursing and assisted living care to eligible veterans, interment options and maintenance of four state veterans' cemeteries, and coordination with federal agencies to provide financial assistance to Kansas veterans for health care and disability income.

The Agency also administers the Veterans' Claims Assistance Program by which eligible residents of Kansas can obtain assistance and advice in procuring benefits from the state and federal governments in the area of veterans' or survivors' benefits. These services are provided through 15 field offices located throughout the state and six offices located in the Federal Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) Medical Centers in Topeka, Leavenworth, and Wichita.

That is a brief overview of the services and programs the KCVA provides. KCVA recognizes that there are growing issues in our State concerning our Veterans who are dealing with mental health problems, substance abuse, traumatic brain injury and other injuries that are not visible but very real. These issues are receiving increased attention, not just in Kansas, but at the Federal VA level. We realize this is a rising concern and a problem in our local communities that impact Veterans, spouses, and children of military families that require a variety of services and treatment before, during, and after deployment.

Our goal is to support the State in addressing these very important needs required for our Veterans. The Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs has the ability to work with and inform Veterans and/or their families through our Veteran Service Representatives (VSR) throughout the State. The VSRs can provide information on resources available and specific points of contact to help with their particular issues. This is also accomplished through our partnership with various veteran service organizations that disseminate information for the KCVA through their local post. We believe we can support the recommendation that the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs provide this information in their benefit briefings and handouts on where veterans and families can turn for help with mental health, substance abuse, or suicide prevention issues. This could be accomplished with additional training to our VSRs and to the Veterans' Claim Assistance Program (VCAP) service officers and Post veteran service

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Date: 1/17/2012

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officers with minimal cost or impact to the KCVA, as long as the required information is provided to our agency.

On behalf of the KCVA, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to brief the committee and for your continued support. I look forward to working with the Veterans, Military and Homeland Security Committee and other parties as we move forward to address this real issue concerning our veterans. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Gregg Burden
Executive Director
Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs