

**STATE OF HAWAII OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES ADVISORY  
BOARD ON VETERANS SERVICES MINUTES**

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Office of Veterans' Services (Tripler Army Medical Center)

459 Patterson Rd. E Wing, Rm 1-A103 Honolulu, HI 96819 **Friday,**

**February 3, 2023**

9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

**ATTENDANCE**

Board Members: Ms. Bridget Komine, Chair  
Mr. Blair Suzuki, Vice Chair  
Mr. Jim Traxler  
Mr. Michael Lilly  
Ms. Roxanne (Rocky) Bruhn  
Ms. Mary Kay Hertog  
Mr. Reyn Kaupiko

OVS Staff: Mr. Ron Han, OVS, Director  
Ms. Yolanda Ehere, Secretary  
Ms. Yam Yi Lee, Administrative Services Assistant

Guests: Ms. Stacey Bonnett, Director, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs –  
Benefits  
Ms. Amy Rohlf, Public Affairs Officer, VA Pacific Islands Health  
Care System – Medical  
Mr. Wade Ishii, Asst. Chief Engineering Officer, State of Hawaii  
DOD Engineering  
Ms. Katherine Korenaga, Community and Project Development Director,  
Department of Human Services  
Ms. Ann Greenlee, U.S. Department of Labor, VETS  
Mr. Lance Pridemore, Assistant Cemetery Director, National Cemetery of  
the Pacific  
Ms. Nicole Gray - Congresswoman Jill Tokuda's Office Representative  
Mr. Carlos Santana – Senator Mazie Hirono's Office Representative

Absent: Ms. Donna Shimizu  
Mr. Juan Babiak, Veterans Liaison, Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home  
Ms. Carol Kanayama, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations  
Mr. Carlos Santana – Senator Mazie Hirono's Office Representative  
Col. Pamela Ellison, Human Resources Officer,  
Hawaii Army National Guard

**I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & CALL TO ORDER – A Moment of Silence**

Vice Chair Blair Suzuki led the Pledge of Allegiance. After a moment of silence, Chair Bridget Komine called the meeting to order at 0900 hours.

**II. MINUTES**

The Board reviewed the January 6, 2023 minutes. Roxanne (Rocky) Bruhn motioned to accept the January 6, 2023 minutes and Mary Kay Hertog seconded.

**III. COMMUNICATIONS**

None

**IV. DEPARTMENT REPORTS**

**Ms. Stacey Bonnett, Director, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs – Benefits**

Briefed on: Response to Board Member question – Travel to neighboring islands for 2-day event?

Answer: We don't currently have a VBA two-day event scheduled. A regional officer will be going to Kauai on February 15<sup>th</sup> from 9am-2pm to answer benefit questions and assist with the claims process. We also have emailed and reached out to the Kauai Veterans Group and the VSO's and the veteran advocates to get the word out about our staff being on the island. We usually have a pretty good turnout for that event and so we anticipate that all of our interview time slots will be filled for that as well.

**Ms. Amy Rohlfs, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs - Pacific Island Health Care System – Medical**

Briefed on: Save the date for the two-day PACT Act community call in Kauai at the Kauai Veteran Center from 8am to 4pm. CBOC staff to be at community events.

Response to Board Member question - There's a disconnect between normal community providers where you get into the VA calendar system, and you get reminders.

Answer: There's a different part of the system and they're looking into what the issue is and whether they can bring the optician into the scheduling system.

**Mr. Ron Han, OVS, Director OVS**

Briefed on: State legislature is open. Daniel Akaka State Veterans Home is 85% completed.

**Mr. Wade Ishii, Asst. Chief Engineering Officer, State of Hawaii DOD Engineering**

Briefed on: No changes on submitted report.

**Ms. Katherine Korenaga, Community and Project Development Director,  
Department of Human Services**

Briefed on: No changes on submitted report

**Ms. Carol Kanayama, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations**

Briefed on: No submitted report

**Ms. Ann Greenlee, U.S. Department of Labor, VETS**

Briefed on: A HUD announced \$3 million in grants to the continuum of care system in Hawaii, and that's partners in care on Oahu and bridging the gap on the neighbor islands. This money is totally committed to homelessness and unsheltered people.

**Mr. Lance Pridemore, Assistant Cemetery Director, National Cemetery of  
the Pacific, National Cemetery of the Pacific – Present. No submitted report**

**Ms. Nicole Gray - Congresswoman Jill Tokuda Office Representative**

Briefed on: I'm with Congresswoman Tokuda's office. I'm still doing Constituent Services and I'm also the Big Island Rep now. I just wanted to let you all know that we are up and running even though we don't have a district office as of yet. Congresswoman has been appointed to the Agriculture Committee and the Armed Services Committee. Please tune in to our social media, particularly YouTube, and sign up for our newsletter to kind of keep track of what's going on in DC.

**Mr. Carlos Santana, Senator Mazie Hirono's Office Representative – Not Present. No submitted report.**

**Mr. Juan Babiak, Veterans Liaison, Yukio Okutsu State Veterans - Not present. No submitted report.**

**Department of Health – Not present. No submitted report.**

**BOARD MEMBER'S REPORTS**

1. Kauai - Ms. Mary Kay Hertog - Report submitted. No additions.
2. Maui - Mr. Michael Lilly - Report submitted. No additions.
3. Oahu - Mr. Blair Suzuki, Vice Chair - No report submitted. No additions.
4. Oahu - Ms. Bridget Komine, Chair - No report submitted. No additions.
5. Oahu - Ms. Reyn Kaupiko – No report submitted. No additions.
6. Oahu - Ms. Roxanne Bruhn - Report submitted. No additions.
7. Big Island - Mr. Jim Traxler - Report submitted. No additions.
8. Big Island - Ms. Donna Shimizu - No report submitted.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

- A. Legislative Committee –No Report or Update
- B. By Laws and Procedures -- No Report or Update
- C. Recognition and Awards –No Report or Update
- D. Women's Committee -- No Report or Update
- E. Projects and Events Committee-
  - Maui Veterans Cemetery Blessing/Dedication Event Update- Michael Lilly
    - Ceremony date has not been locked in.

**V. ADJOURN – 9:27am**

Mary Kay Hertog motioned, and Roxanne (Rocky) Bruhn seconded.  
Yolanda Ehere – Recorder