



A G E N D A

ORANGE COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY COUNCIL

March 9, 2022

12:00 P.M.

www.veterans.ocgov.com/advisory

***Pursuant to Government Code Section 54953(e)(1), as amended by AB 361, this meeting will be held by zoom. Members of the public may observe and address the meeting telephonically. To attend the meeting via teleconference please call:**

Dial (for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location):

US: +1 669 900 9128 or +1 346 248 7799 or +1 253 215 8782 or +1 301 715 8592 or +1 312 626 6799 or +1 646 558 8656

Webinar ID: 812 1006 4168 / Link to meeting: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81210064168>

****In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, those requiring accommodation for this meeting should notify the Orange County Community Services office 72 hours prior to the meeting at (714) 480-6555****

This agenda contains a brief general description of each item to be considered. The Council encourages your participation. If you wish to speak you may do so during Public Comment. To speak during Public Comment, press *9 following the Chair's invitation from the public to speak. Once acknowledged and prompted by the Chair, you may begin to speak. Except as otherwise provided by law, no action shall be taken on any item not appearing in the agenda. When addressing the Council, please state your name and city of residence for the record prior to providing your comments.

This agenda contains a brief description of each item to be considered. Except as provided by law, no action shall be taken on any item not appearing in the agenda. Members of the public that wish to send comments or speak on an item(s) may send a completed Speaker Request Form(s) identifying the items and send them to OCCSAdvisoryCouncilsBoards@occr.ocgov.com prior to the beginning of the meeting. To speak on a matter not appearing in the agenda, but under the jurisdiction of this Advisory Council, you may do so during Public Comments. Speaker request forms must be sent prior to the beginning of the meeting, the reading of the individual agenda items and/or the beginning of Public Comments. When addressing the Board, it is requested that you state your name for the record. Address the Board as a whole through the Chair. Comments to individual Members or staff are not permitted. Speakers are limited to three (3) minutes.

Materials/handouts can be requested up to 72 hours in advance of the meeting by visiting www.veterans.ocgov.com/advisory.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Erik Duane
2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
3. COUNCIL ROLL CALL: OC Community Services Representative
4. PUBLIC COMMENT:
At this time, members of the public may address the Council regarding any items within the subject jurisdiction, provided that no action is taken on off-agenda items unless authorized by law. (Comments shall be limited to three (3) minutes, unless the Chair pre-identifies a different time at the start of meeting for all public speakers).
5. ACTION ITEMS:
 - i. AB 361 Review and make findings required by Government Code subsection 54953(e)(3).
Recommendation: Continue virtual meetings due to the proclaimed state of the emergency arising from COVID-19, meeting in person presents imminent risks to the health and safety of attendees, and the emergency continues to directly impact the ability of the members to meet safely in person.
 - ii. Approve Letter of Support AB 1595 Veterans Cemetery: Chairman Erik Duane
 - iii. Approve Letter of Recommendation to Board of Supervisors Regarding Welcome Home Event for Post 9/11 Veterans: Council Member Alex Maslin
6. PRESENTATION:

VA COVID-19 Testing Resources
Walt Dannenberg,
FACHE Director
Tibor Rubin VA Medical Center
VA Long Beach Healthcare System
7. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT: Chairman Erik Duane
8. OCVSO UPDATE: Elena Kim, Veterans Service Office
9. CALVET LINC UPDATE: Ben Gales, Local Interagency Network Coordinator
10. STANDING COMMITTEES:
 - i. Communications Committee Report: Council Member Alex Maslin
 - ii. Events/Outreach Committee Report: Council Member Vladimir Anderson & Council Member Mario Munoz
 - iii. Welcome Home Event Ad Hoc Committee Report/Status Update: Council Member Alex Maslin

11. COUNCIL COMMENTS

At this time, members of this Advisory Council may comment on agenda or non-agenda matters and ask questions of or give directions to staff; provided that NO action may be taken on off-agenda items unless authorized by law.

12. ADJOURNMENT:

Next Meeting:
April 13, 2022
12:00 PM

“Have We Helped A Veteran Today?”

DISCLAIMER: No member of the Orange County Veterans Advisory Council (OCVAC) shall sign a letter or make a statement purported to represent the position of OCVAC as a body. Letters or verbal statements of support or opposition on any issue shall only be made or signed by the Chair of OCVAC and shall be submitted to the Board for approval. The policy of the Board of Supervisors does not allow OCVAC or its Chair to sign a letter of position on any matters pertaining to legislation. OCVAC members may write personal letters or speak as individuals stating personal positions but may not do so as representing the position or opinion of OCVAC.

Sample Support Letter For Organizations**(DATE)**

The Honorable Sharon Quirk-Silva
Assemblymember, 65th District
1440 North Harbor Boulevard, Suite 270
Fullerton, CA 92835

The Honorable Steven Choi, Ph.D.
Assemblymember, 68th District
3240 El Camino Real, Suite 110
Irvine, CA 92602

SUBJECT: AB 1595 –Veterans Cemetery, County of Orange–SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Quirk-Silva and Assemblymember Choi:

On behalf of **(organization)** thank you for authoring Assembly Bill (AB) 1595 to allow the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) to design, develop, and construct a state-operated veterans cemetery in Orange County. Home to former Army, Navy, and Marine bases and an estimated 104,949 veterans, Orange County is California's largest county without a veterans cemetery.

After almost a decade of vigorous efforts to build a veterans cemetery in the City of Irvine it has become painfully obvious that for many reasons, this is no longer realistic. We have endured lawsuits, ballot initiatives, and numerous competing petition campaigns while too many of our brothers and sisters passed away without an appropriate resting place. We are united in our support to finally build a suitable resting place for our fallen. It is time to make a Veterans cemetery a reality for the brave men and women who served this great country.

On July 27, 2021, the Orange County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved allocating \$20 million exclusively for site development of a veterans cemetery at Gypsum Canyon and adopted a resolution to move forward with planning and developing a site to honor and respect the men and women who served our great country. The Board previously allocated over 200 acres of county-owned land at Gypsum Canyon in Anaheim Hills near the intersection of the 91 freeway and 241 toll road, which has been deeded to the Orange County Cemetery District (OCCD) for the purpose of building a veterans cemetery.

The Gypsum Canyon site in the City of Anaheim is a feasible, timely, and logical alternative to the disputed options currently under consideration. All 34 Orange County cities have adopted resolutions supporting the Gypsum Canyon site. In addition, a bipartisan majority of Orange County state and federal delegation members, numerous veterans organization leaders, and more than 140 local elected officials all enthusiastically support a veterans cemetery at Gypsum Canyon. However, legislation is needed to amend the Military & Veterans Code in order to proceed.

AB 1595 would allow CalVet to acquire, study, design, develop, construct, and equip a state-owned and state-operated Southern California Veterans Cemetery in Orange County so that we may honor the men and women who served our country and who deserve the right to be buried in Orange County.

For these reasons, **(ORGANIZATION)** enthusiastically supports AB 1595.

Sincerely,

(Signature)
(title), (organization)

Cc: Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin: Chair, Assembly Military & Veterans Affairs Committee
Senator Bob Archuleta, Chair – Senate Military & Veterans Affairs Committee
Christian Burkin – Chief Consultant, Assembly Military & Veterans Affairs Committee
Veronica Badillo – Staff Director, Senate Military & Veterans Affairs Committee
Members, Orange County Legislative Delegation
Members, Orange County Board of Supervisors

March 9th, 2022
Orange County Board of Supervisors
333 West Santa Ana Boulevard
Santa Ana, California 92701

Re: OCVAC Proposal: OC Welcome Home Event for Post 9-11 Veterans

Dear Board of Supervisors:

We write to encourage you to lead a county-wide “welcome home” event for post-9-11 veterans that we believe will be of great benefit to the wellbeing of both pre and post-9-11 veterans.

Executive Summary

This event was conceived at the September meeting of the Orange County Veterans Advisory Council (OCVAC) when all the council members were feeling and sharing their deep distress they felt during and after the chaotic withdrawal of American Forces from Afghanistan. Those conversations have resulted in this plan to help post-9-11 veterans by giving them a county-wide welcome home ceremony.

The Veterans Advisory Council have taken as their inspiration the federally funded Vietnam Commemoration program that honors Vietnam-era military veterans and gold star families with a lapel pin and a certificate at ceremonies that are hosted by local government and non-profit organizations around the country. We envision a similar ‘pinning ceremony’ in which the county would provide commemorative lapel pins and certificates of recognition to post-9-11 veterans. The ceremony would utilize older veterans, elected officials and other dignitaries. We propose conducting the ceremony at an outdoor venue in Central Orange County and suggest the addition to the program of a resource fair, a military colors ceremony, a military fly-over, a short speaking program, a small ceremony honoring allies of partner nations and such other elements as the county may see fit.

We believe the event proposed here is necessary to the well being and full reintegration of our post-911 veterans. It would also benefit the larger veterans community by increasing the sense of belonging that veterans should feel amongst one another and within a civilian population that greatly values their service but have, heretofore, lacked an appropriate way to express their admiration. It is our hope that this event will provide a positive sense of closure from a series of wars that have wound down without official recognition or ceremony, to the great detriment of those who have sacrificed so much in our name. We also believe that our proposal can be carried out at modest cost to the County which will be able to leverage considerable good will among veterans groups, municipal governments and the broader civilian community.

Background

The veterans of the Vietnam War often returned to a civilian world that criticized or even mocked them for their service in an unpopular war. But the sheer number of Vietnam veterans, who were part of a vast conscripted military, eventually allowed them to advocate for themselves. By the 1980s, the national will had changed. Americans began to understand that no matter what their views were on the Vietnam War or any other conflict, that those who serve in the uniformed military provide heroic, selfless contributions on which our liberty has and will always depend. No cohort of veterans, including post-9-11 vets, has or, thankfully, seems likely to ever suffer that kind of popular disdain again. Nevertheless, the shift to an all volunteer

military that began with the abolition of the draft in 1973 has left today's veterans in a position every bit as vulnerable as the Vietnam veterans who preceded them.

Whereas roughly 13% (12.838%) of the US population were veterans in 1970, less than 7% of today's U.S. population and a mere 4.6% of Orange County's population have served in uniform, percentages that are falling every day as the draft era veterans reach their twilight years. It's a situation that post-9-11 veterans are very aware of. Indeed, with the active duty military staying at roughly 1.2 million sailors, soldiers, airmen and Marines throughout our recent conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Africa, or about 0.5% of the US population, the members of our all-volunteer warrior class grew bitterly fond of saying "we went to war; America went to the mall." It is a situation where the experiences of those who have served and carried as heavy a load in defense of freedom as any previous generation came home to a civilian population that had been relatively shielded from the conflict due to the geographical distance from the war and the prolonged nature of the conflict which led to media coverage fatigue. Thus civilians, no matter how well-intentioned they might be, have been at pains to say anything more than 'thank you for your service' and veterans have felt equally estranged by having no clear manner to explain their experience.

This is a frustration that the members of the OCVAC have heard from our fellow veterans for more than decade, something that comes up again and again when we speak, be it in private conversation or our public meetings and forums. Indeed, it is a wound that each of us has felt and that was greatly exacerbated last August when the American War in Afghanistan petered out in an ignominious withdrawal from the Kabul Airport amidst a bombing that took the lives of 13 service members and included a botched evacuation plan that abandoned thousands of our allies to a ruthless, vengeful enemy. Some of our peers had to seek counseling and many of us cried private tears, our only solace coming from private circles of fellow veterans. There has been no public event, no parade, funeral oration or remembrance in which our twenty-years of war was acknowledged or put into a patriotic context. So where the Vietnam generation came home to vitriol and disdain, the post-9-11 generation faced what has felt like—even if it wasn't intended as—callous indifference.

Your Veterans Advisory Councilmembers hope that this narrative description convinces you of the need for a county welcome home event. But we also want to remind you of some of the statistical evidence that veterans, especially post-9-11 veterans are suffering. While the vast majority of veterans overcome the difficulties of readjusting to civilian life to lead exemplary careers and family lives, a significant minority suffer greatly. Rates of unemployment, homelessness, incarceration, substance abuse, depression and suicide are all higher in the veterans population than they are in the broader U.S. population but are particularly high for younger, post-9-11 veterans. For instance, in 2018 the suicide rate for the general U.S. population was 18.3 per 100,000 people, was 27.5 per 100,000 for veterans as a whole but were a shockingly, unacceptable 45.9 per 100,000 for post--9-11 veterans. This recommendation is an appeal for the county to address these disparities by providing the welcome home they deserve.

Event Concept

The importance of memorializing veterans, especially war veterans, as a part of a healthy and healing transition has been well-documented, most notably in the experience of Vietnam veterans who now benefit from the Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act of 2017. The law funds DoD sponsored ceremonies in which local governments and community groups give veterans, gold star families and POWs certificates of recognition and a commemorative lapel

pin. We have designed a county program that is similar to the federal program but with a more focused timeline and a greater emphasis on connecting veterans to resources and networks around that event. While the BOS and it's staff are free to modify or revise our proposals in any way they see fit, we are presenting here a broad outline for an event conducted in four phases.

Phase 1: Planning, Site Selection, Community Liaison and Budgeting (April-June)--If approved by the BOS, this period would be used to plan out and budget the funding for the event. This would also be the period in which OC Community Services would solicit price quotes for required items and services including the design and production of an "OC Welcomes Home it's Post-9-11 Heroes" lapel pin.

Phase 2: Preparation and Advertising (June to September)--OC Community Services would use this time to do public outreach and advertise the event, including a web portal where veterans would be encouraged to pre-register for the event. This would also be the period in which each Supervisor's office staff would print certificates for each of the volunteers who registered.

Phase 3: Execution (TBD Saturday in September)--On a Saturday in mid-to late September the county would host an event. We propose the following timeline as an easily modified template:

0900 Hrs	Event/Resource Fair Opens -rectangle w/ food trucks at one end, resource tables under EZ-Ups on long sides and a stage at the far end.
1000 Hrs	Resource Fair Closes Temporarily for Program
1015-1100 Hrs	Speaking Program from Center Stage -Veterans seated in front rows. - Acknowledgements, Post the Colors, National Anthem, invocation, Military Fly-Over, Short BOS Speeches and address from one special guest.
1100-1115 Hrs ranks of	Pinning Ceremony ('pinning ambassadors' recruited from the veterans organizations, elected officials and other dignitaries will give pins and certificates to each registered nominee.
1115-1130 Hrs Military	Flag and Flower Ceremony for Allied Soldiers, Interpreters and Contractors who have settled in Orange County (event ambassadors give each ally a handheld flag and a flower).
1130-1300 Hrs	Food trucks and resource booths open

Phase 4: Legacy Program (September to ?)--On an ongoing/rolling basis, each Supervisor would now have a program to "Welcome" each "Post-9-11 Veteran" home with a lapel pin and a certificate of recognition.

Suggested Venues for Consideration

1. Heroes Hall at the OC Fairgrounds (Costa Mesa)
2. UC Irvine-(home of the OC Veterans & Families Collaborative, significant population of post-9-11 student veterans & an excellent ROTC Program.
3. Tustin Regional Park

Suggested County Resources and Other Partners

1. County Resources–Veterans Resource Center, Workforce Development and the Orange County Veterans Advisory Council.
2. Federal Agencies–Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Benefits Administration, Veterans, National Cemetery Administration, OC Congressional delegation.
3. State Agencies-California Department of Veterans, California Employment Development Department.
4. Veterans Advocacy Organizations: Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, Iraq and Afghan Veterans of America (IAVA), Modern Military Association of America.
5. Veterans Service Agencies: Wounded Warriors, Veterans Business Network of Southern California, USVets, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Veterans Legal Institute, Orange County Veterans and Military Families Collaborative.
6. Educational Institutions: All accredited county colleges and universities.
7. College ROTC and Junior ROTC Units–Great volunteering opportunity for veterans and color guards for ceremony.
8. Prospective Employers: large as well as small businesses looking to hire and government and nonprofit employers.
9. The event is loosely modeled on a Department of Defense program that was funded by Congress in 2012 in which Vietnam Veterans are welcomed home in their own communities with a lapel pin and certificate at events held in local communities by government and community groups who work with DoD to host these events.
10. Orange County Veterans Court.
11. Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton Band
12. A Military rotary or fixed-wing aircraft squadron to perform the missing man flyover

The members of the Veterans Advisory Council greatly appreciate your consideration of this important endeavor and pledge to support you in any variation of this plan you wish to pursue.

Sincerely,

Erik Duane
Chairman
Orange County Veterans Advisory Council

CC: Supervisor Andrew Do, District 1
Supervisor Katrina Foley, District 2
Supervisor Donald P. Wagner, Vice Chairman, District 3
Supervisor Doug Chaffee, Chairman, District 4
Supervisor Lisa Bartlett, District 5