



Orange County Veterans Advisory Council

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January 10, 2024

Orange County Board of Supervisors
333 W. Santa Ana Blvd.
Santa Ana, California 92701

Re: Orange County Veterans Advisory Council Annual Report

Dear Chair Wagner and the Orange County Board of Supervisors:

The Orange County Veterans Advisory Council (“OCVAC”) hereby submits its Annual Report on Council Activities. This report contains background information on OCVAC, OCVAC meeting information, a recap of OCVAC’s 2023 recommendations to the Board of Supervisors, OCVAC’s goals for 2024, and general veterans-related event information.

I. Background.

OCVAC was created on March 28, 1978, and is tasked with advising the Board of Supervisors on issues of importance to veterans and their dependents based on input from the veteran community; providing a source of liaison and communication with various groups relative to veterans’ issues; and, promoting involvement in veterans’ related events and functions within the County.

OCVAC consists of volunteer members appointed by the Board of Supervisors who are U.S. military veterans with Honorable Discharges and are residents of Orange County. Each of the five (5) County Supervisors may appoint a veteran from their district and there are four (4) at large positions. Here are the current OCVAC councilmembers:

District	Member
District 1	Erik Duane
District 2	Vacant
District 3	Bobby MacDonald
District 4	Steven Vargas, Vice-Chair 2024

District	Member
District 5	Alexis Paschedag Federico, Chair 2024
Member At Large	John Burick
Member At Large	Alex Maslin
Member At Large	Michael Radigan
Member At Large	Stephanie Wade

In 2023, Stephanie Wade served as OCVAC Chair and Alexis Paschedag Federico served as the Vice Chair. On November 8, 2023, OCVAC elected Alexis Paschedag Federico as the 2024 Chair and Steven Vargas as the 2024 Vice-Chair.

II. Meetings.

In 2023, OCVAC held regular meetings on January 11, February 8, March 8, April 12, June 14, August 9, October 11 and November 8, and held a special meeting on January 4. OCVAC heard presentations on various veterans-related issues, including: LifeScore Holistic Health App John Wordin, Founder and Chairman, Life Aid; Orange County Master Plan on Aging Tammy Peng, Director of Operations, Advance OC; and Setting Up a Veteran Peer Access Network in Orange County Los Angeles Veteran Peer Access Network. OCVAC resumed in-person meetings.

In 2024, OCVAC will meet on January 10, March 13, May 8, June 12, August 14, October 9, and November 13. OCVAC will hold its annual election on November 13, 2023.

To increase its presence and accessibility to Orange County veterans, OCVAC has decided to start rotating its meeting location within the five (5) Orange County District communities, starting with its March 13, 2024 meeting at the Brea Civic Cultural Center, City Council Chambers, 1 Civic Center Circle, Brea, CA 92821.

III. 2023 Recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.

In 2023, OCVAC sent three (3) letters to the Board of Supervisors relating to veterans' issues, recommending it take certain actions.

On February 10, 2021 OCVAC recommended the Board of Supervisors support efforts for federal action to revise and streamline the process of correcting discharge documents for Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender ("LGBT") veterans. On April 8, 2021, then-Chairman Andrew Do and then-Vice Chairman Doug Chaffee sent a letter to Senators Feinstein and Padilla and Representatives Correa, Kim, Levin, Lowenthal, Porter, Sanchez, and Steel in support of potential legislative action regarding LGBT related military discharge process. On August 9, 2023, OCVAC voted to resubmit the 2021 OCVAC Letter of Support in light of California Senate Joint Resolution 6 Don't Ask, Don't Tell: discharge characterizations ("SJR-6"), recommending the Board of Supervisors voice support for SJR-6.

On March 9, 2022, OCVAC recommended the Board of Supervisors lead a county-wide “welcome home” event for post 9-11 veterans. On October 22, 2022, Supervisor Foley hosted a Post 9-11 Welcome Home Event at Heroes Hall. On August 9, 2023, OCVAC voted to resubmit the 2022 OCVAC Letter of Support regarding the Welcome Home Program to the Board of Supervisors for consideration of a county-wide event.

On August 29, 2023, OCVAC recommended, and the Board of Supervisors approved, a bylaw revision that clarified that Orange County staff are permitted to travel to OCVAC meeting locations and that mileage reimbursement would not be considered an impermissible “additional cost” to the County.

In that same letter, OCVAC also recommended that the Board of Supervisors provide tele/video conferencing capabilities or another similar electronic medium to the Orange County Veterans Service Office at 1300 S Grand Ave, Building B, where OCVAC regularly held its meetings. OCVAC made this recommendation because in-person attendance can pose a hardship to some, if not many, veterans and OCVAC believes that providing remote viewing and/or participation options would increase veteran participation. The VSO conference room still does not have this capability.

IV. OCVAC’s 2024 Goals.

In 2024, OCVAC will seek to increase its presence and accessibility in various Orange County communities. In addition to rotating its regular meetings in various districts, OCVAC members have set a goal to each attend at least one veterans-related event per month. OCVAC is also working with County staff to better disseminate event information to the council and to determine the best way for the public to connect with individual council members.

OCVAC has also established an ad hoc committee to evaluate the Orange County Veterans Service Office’s (“VSO”) reporting metrics. OCVAC intends to evaluate the VSO reporting metrics, compare them to other counties’ VSO metrics, investigate whether other metrics should be reported, and determine whether there are any resource shortfalls or other assistance OCVAC may help address through recommendation to the Board of Supervisors.

OCVAC is also looking into whether County-affiliated governmental entities and cities in Orange County have policies and programs similar to the County’s Veteran Employment Policy and the Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise (“DVBE”) programs, which were approved by the Board of Supervisors in 2020 and have greatly benefited Orange County veterans.

V. 2024 Veterans’ Events in Orange County.

Orange County is one of the most veteran friendly counties due in large part to the support of the Board of Supervisors and the tireless dedication of various Orange County veterans service groups. If any Supervisor would like specific information concerning veterans-related events in their District or anywhere in Orange County, please feel free to contact me or your district OCVAC member. As a general matter, we would like to highlight the following annual events important to veterans and their families.

April is designated as Month of the Military Child and is a time to honor the sacrifices made by military families worldwide. On average, military families move every two to three years, which means military children change schools and support networks roughly six to nine times during

their school years. Military OneSource, an official Department of Defense website, offers free ideas and resources to celebrate military children.

<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/parenting/children-youth-teens/month-of-the-military-child/#events>

On May 24, 2024, various veterans service organizations, veterans, and cities in Orange County will honor and mourn U.S. military personnel who died while serving in the United States Armed Forces by hosting Memorial Day events.

On November 11, 2024, various veterans service organizations, veterans, and cities in Orange County will celebrate and honor veterans of the United States Armed Forces by hosting Veterans Day events.

It has been our pleasure to serve the Board of Supervisors and Orange County veteran community in 2023 and we look forward to continuing our service in 2024.

Sincerely,

Alexis Paschedag Federico
Chairperson
Orange County Veterans Advisory Council

CC: Supervisor Andrew Do, Vice Chairman, District 1
Supervisor Vicente Sarmiento, Chair, District 2
Supervisor Donald P. Wagner, Chair, District 3
Supervisor Doug Chaffee, District 4
Supervisor Katrina Foley District 5
Dylan Wright, OCCR Director
Renee Ramirez, OCCS Director
Frank Kim, CEO