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NATIONAL COMMISSION ON MILITARY, NATIONAL, AND PUBLIC SERVICE

Minutes of August 2018 Commission Meeting

The National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service (the Commission) held a meeting on August 16-17, 2018, in Memphis, TN. The meeting concerned organizational and other pre-decisional and deliberative matters and was closed to the public pursuant to Public Law 114-328, section 554(b)(3). The Commissioners agreed to make a separate version of these minutes available to the public.

Attendance

Commissioners present:

- Mr. Steve Barney (part of 8/16, all of 8/17)
- The Honorable Mark Gearan
- Ms. Avril Haines
- The Honorable Dr. Joseph Heck (8/16 only)
- Ms. Shawn Skelly
- The Honorable Debra Wada

Commissioners present by phone:

- The Honorable Dr. Janine Davidson (part of 8/16)
- Ms. Jeanette James (part of 8/16)

Commissioners absent:

- Mr. Edward T. Allard III
- Mr. Alan Khazei
- Mr. Thomas Kilgannon

Staff present:

- Kent Abernathy, Executive Director
- Paul Lekas, General Counsel
- Keri Lowry, Director of Government Affairs and Public Engagement
- Annie Rorem, Deputy Director of Research and Analysis

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- Peter Morgan, Deputy Director of Operations
- Other Commission staff

August 16, 2018

Business Meeting

The Commission convened at 0735 CT to hold a business meeting. Present were Commissioners Heck, Gearan, Haines, Skelly, and Wada. Participating by phone were Commissioners Davidson and James. The Chairman moved to close this and other business meetings to occur on August 16-17 because pre-decisional and organizational matters would be deliberated. All Commissioners present agreed.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Heck then moved to approve minutes from the July 2018 Commission meeting. The Commission voted unanimously to approve the July 2018 minutes.

Research Update

Ms. Rorem briefed the Commission on planning for meetings in October, November, and December. The meetings would be designed to address Commissioners' knowledge gaps through briefings while reserving sufficient time for deliberation. She noted a few of the anticipated sessions.

Briefings planned for the October meeting include a representative from the Department of Defense Office of Net Assessment; educational policy experts to address civics education, service learning, and state-level curricular change; and constitutional scholars. On Friday, October 19, staff is preparing an all-day session that would focus on issues around the question of whether women should be required to register with the Selective Service. That session would include representatives from the Marines and Army to discuss their studies into opening combat positions to women; testimonials from combat veterans; and individuals addressing faith-based perspectives on the issue. The intent is to provide Commissioners with a spectrum of views from the personal to the scholarly.

In November, staff is arranging a discussion of attaches to address mandatory national service in foreign countries, along with representatives from the Department of Homeland Security and other agencies focused on domestic crises and emergencies.

Commissioners provided further input and raised questions about the fall briefings. Chairman Heck noted that although Stanley McChrystal planned to attend one of the fall meetings, he is no longer available to attend; staff would be exploring future opportunities for him to speak with the Commission. Ms. Haines recommended follow up on a contact she had developed at LinkedIn. She believes that contact would be valuable for perspectives on establishing a registration system as well as LinkedIn's efforts to facilitate public service. Mr. Abernathy noted that he would be speaking with a senior LinkedIn official in the next week.

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Vice Chair Gearan emphasized the importance of identifying “critical” individuals – those whose absence from the Commission’s contacts would undermine the Commission’s final recommendations. Among these, he included Gen. McChrystal and Robert Putnam. He suggested Commissioners could meet with these individuals outside of regular meetings, noting that those Commissioners in the Boston area could easily find time to meet with Prof. Putnam. Ms. Rorem asked that Commissioners provide such names to staff for assistance in arranging meetings. Chairman Heck recommended that Commissioners begin an effort to reach out to these critical individuals after issuing the interim report. At that stage, the Commission will be taking feedback as it starts to focus on the development of recommendations and would benefit most from those conversations.

Dr. Rough, participating by phone, addressed a question about the faith-based panel focused on women and Selective Service registration. She noted that staff is engaged in outreach and is speaking with a few individuals. Ms. Rorem added that major religious organizations have not taken doctrinal positions on this issue. This is addressed in a research primer prepared by the research team. Ms. James recommended reaching out to non-mainstream religious organizations and non-Christian religions.

Ms. James inquired about the status of talks with the Reagan Library regarding the Reagan National Defense Forum in December. Ms. Lowry said that staff is in contact with the organizers and is exploring an opportunity to provide a keynote address. She said she would have a good sense of that by September.

Ms. Rorem then briefed the Commission on the research team’s review and analysis of public comments. She provided summary material regarding the over 1,300 comments received through May 2018. She noted that most of these arrived through the Commission’s website and some were provided in direct response to the Federal Register solicitation. The research team is in the process of coding the comments in order to facilitate analysis.

Vice Chair Gearan recommended that the Commission respond to all comments received. Ms. Rorem noted that staff is in touch with some public commenters but as a general matter is not responding to each comment received. Chairman Heck said that staff lacks the bandwidth to respond to each comment but could create a pre-printed postcard to send to those individuals who provide comments by mail.

Trip Overview

Mr. Abernathy introduced new staff members to the Commission and noted that Mr. Barney would be joining the trip on August 17. Katie McSheffrey then briefed the Commission on the events scheduled for August 16 and 17. The content is reflected in the agenda and briefing material provided to Commissioners.

Chairman’s Remarks

Chairman Heck reminded Commissioners to plan on three-day meetings throughout 2019 which would be scheduled, roughly, for the third week of each month. He also requested that Commissioner remain flexible because some dates would be contingent on availability at

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presidential libraries. With respect to hearings, he noted that two hearings would occur at presidential libraries and the remainder would occur in the D.C. area. He also asked that Commissioners keep available an additional two days per month for other engagements and meetings with critical individuals.

Work Group Deliberations

Thereafter, Commissioners met in Work Groups to deliberate issues concerning the matters within the scope of their respective Work Groups. Accounts of these sessions are set forth in internal memoranda for the record (MFRs).

Outreach and Engagement Event

At approximately 1000 CT, Commissioners departed for a meeting with local business and philanthropic leaders to discuss corporate and philanthropic efforts to encourage service to address the needs of Memphis and its residents. An account of this discussion is set forth in a separate MFR.

Business Meeting

At approximately 1235 CT, Commissioners reconvened to continue their business meeting. Present were Commissioners Heck, Gearan, Haines, Skelly, and Wada.

Engagement Plan Update

Ms. Lowry briefed the Commission on the staff's engagement plan. She described the different facets of the engagement team: government affairs, to include congressional and federal, state, and local government officials; external affairs; and public affairs, to include strategic communications.

She spoke first to the congressional plan, which has three lines of effort. First is outreach to the five core committees in each chamber that are important to the Commission.¹ She noted that staff had begun talking to staff on some of the committees and will continue, going forward, to arrange meetings with majority and ranking members. Second is engagement with caucuses. The objective would be to identify key stakeholders to assist in convening groups that can help to amplify the Commission's message. Third is connecting to individual members around the country. Thus far, staff has notified each member in districts that the Commission will visit.

Ms. Lowry then addressed efforts to engage federal government agencies. She noted that staff had convened two meetings of an interagency group and plans to maintain relationships with those agencies that could be affected by recommendations the Commission may make. Staff

¹ *Senate:* Appropriations; Armed Services; Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions; Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs; and Veterans' Affairs. *House:* Appropriations; Armed Services; Education and the Workforce; Homeland Security; Oversight and Government Reform; and Veterans' Affairs.

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would also be holding targeted meetings with various agencies ahead of the interim report release.

Next, Ms. Lowry addressed associations and organizations for state and local government, including the National Governors Association, the National Conference of State Legislators, and the United States Conference of Mayors. The current objective is to meet with these groups to inform them of the Commission's efforts and ensure that the Commission can be an integral part of their agendas in 2019 and 2020.

The external affairs effort covers non-governmental organizations, academics, think tanks, and others. Ms. Lowry's team is prioritizing those groups. Their objective is to ensure that the Commission is talking with key stakeholders. They have prioritized organizations in fifteen categories. Some organizations will be critical for awareness raising while others are key influencers.

Ms. Lowry then turned to public affairs. She noted that staff is just now starting to make progress on this front. They are working to build interest at the national level, and Vice Chair Wada's feature on PBS was one of the first fruits of that effort. Ms. Lowry's goal is to use the remainder of 2018 to build rapport and relationships with those entities to facilitate efforts in 2019 and 2020. Cristina Flores then spoke briefly to social and digital media efforts, noting that staff would be exploring non-traditional media such as podcasts and YouTube videos.

Ms. Lowry then described how she envisions the phasing of communications and engagement efforts. From August through December 2018, the objectives are to develop engagements to fill out Commissioner or staff knowledge gaps, to raise awareness about the Commission, and to establish and develop relationships with key stakeholders. In the first half of 2019, the Commission will be holding public hearings and Ms. Lowry's team also plans to arrange public engagements around the country to raise awareness, build consensus, and connect with those groups whose voices should be heard before the Commission finalizes its recommendations. She is recommending a robust media schedule to accompany this effort and anticipates that Commissioners, the Executive Director, and the rest of the staff executive team will be engaging with organizations along with the media. During the second half of 2019, the plan is to solidify relationships with key partners and stakeholders, develop a national conversation, and implement a robust effort to launch the final report and "sell" the Commission's recommendations.

Vice Chair Gearan asked about conferences in 2019. Ms. Lowry said many of the over 200 external entities that her team has spoken with hold conferences or other annual events and the Commission may want to have a speaking role at some of these. Her team is in the early stages of mapping out a plan for conference participation.

Chairman Heck informed Commissioners that the meeting, hearing, and external engagement schedule for 2019 would be ready by the October meeting. At that time, Commissioners will have an opportunity to sign up for engagements that are able to attend.

Chairman Heck then turned to the October meeting and asked that Commissioners have an opportunity to hear directly from representatives from veterans and military service

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organizations (VSOs and MSOs) on Selective Service-related topics. He said it would be a mistake for Commissioners themselves not to meet with them in the near term. He noted that while these organizations are on record with respect to the issue of women in combat, they have not opined on whether the United States still requires a draft and/or on the question of whether women should register with the Selective Service. Vice Chair Wada and Chairman Heck suggested different approaches for reaching out to the VSO and MSO communities. Vice Chair Wada cautioned against selective invitations. Chairman Heck recommended that each organization be invited to provide testimony for the record.

Outreach and Engagement Events

At approximately 1300 CT, Commissioners departed for two outreach and engagement events. First, Commissioners met with local, county, and state employees to address civil service reform and other issues within the Commission’s mandate. Next, Commissioners held a discussion about service learning with trainers, implementers, and students. Mr. Barney arrived in time to be included in the second meeting. Accounts of these discussions are set forth in separate MFRs.

Public Meeting

Beginning at 1830 CT, the Commission held a public meeting at the National Civil Rights Museum. The theme of the meeting was “Building on a Legacy of Civic Engagement: Roles and Responsibilities in Modern America.”

August 17, 2018

Outreach and Engagement Events

Commissioners Barney, Gearan, Haines, Skelly, and Wada participated in two meetings during the morning of August 17. These included a meeting on faith-based issues and the provision of health care to those in need and conversations with students of the Tennessee College of Applied Technology. Accounts of these engagements are set forth in separate MFRs.

Business Meeting

The Commission then held a brief meeting to review the Memphis trip. Attending the session were Commissioners Barney, Gearan, Haines, Skelly, and Wada. Vice Chair Gearan presided over this portion of the deliberation.

Commissioners generally praised the quality of the participants and discussions reflected in the events on August 16 and 17. Ms. Skelly endorsed the decision to expand several meeting periods from 60 to 90 minutes which helps to build trust and facilitate a richer conversation. Ms. Haines felt that the students at the technical college were not fully aware of the topics, which hindered a more fulsome discussion within her discussion group. Mr. Barney appreciated the diversity of ages and experience at the technical college; participants in his discussion group seemed excited about developing new skills and learning meaningful things at the college. Ms.

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Haines noted continued expressions of frustration about USAJOBS, which people find intimidating, unclear, and not amenable to translating certain experience into the qualifications required for positions. Also, discussion group participants felt that the private sector was more effective than service-oriented organizations in speaking to the students about potential opportunities.

Commissioners then asked for staff perspectives on the Memphis meetings. Jud Crane noted the interest in Selective Service issues, including women registration. He felt that folks were engaged on these issues and held passionate views even, for example, in the meeting at the Congregational Health Network. Mr. Barney noted a recurring comment among meeting participants when discussing this topic: ensuring an exemption for individuals with childcare duties. Mr. Barney felt this suggested that the general public does not understand the distinction between Selective Service and the draft. As members of Congress reflect their constituencies, Mr. Barney recommended that the Commission not assume that members will automatically understand this distinction. Vice Chair Wada suggested clarifying this distinction in the interim report. Vice Chair Gearan recognized the significant communications challenge this presents. Ms. Lowry noted that the Selective Service System lacks a budget for education and awareness.

Ms. Rorem asked Commissioners about the balance between work group deliberations and engagements. Vice Chair Wada thought the balance worked well, noting that Commissioners will consume as much time as allotted in deliberation.

Vice Chair Wada remarked about a comment raised in the public meeting about providing service opportunities for convicted felons. Ms. Skelly noted that this comment had been raised before. Ms. Haines spoke to the commenter after the public meeting, who noted that during Vietnam, convicted felons were permitted to serve in the military; the commenter had friends who benefitted from that and felt service pathways would serve that population well. Mr. Barney recommended that the Commission consider ways to address pathways for transitioning communities, including those coming out of prison as well as people coming out of the military. He suggested that providing opportunities for these individuals to serve their communities could assist in the transitioning process.

Vice Chair Gearan turned to the structure of future meetings, particularly as the Commission moves towards three-day meetings. He asked if there would be a benefit to having a collective meeting at the beginning or end of each day to discuss what the Commission wants to accomplish, recommending a thirty-minute session at the start of the day. Ms. Haines agreed with this recommendation.

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Meetings with Tennessee Air National Guard

In the afternoon, Commissioners Barney, Gearan, Haines, Skelly, and Wada met with representatives of the Tennessee Air National Guard. They held conversations with Guard leadership as well as Guardsmen. Accounts of these engagements are set forth in separate MFRs.

Prepared by Paul Lekas, General Counsel

Adopted by the Commission on September 19, 2018