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NATIONAL COMMISSION ON MILITARY, NATIONAL, AND PUBLIC SERVICE

Minutes of January 2018 Commission Meeting

The National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service (the Commission) held a meeting on January 18-19, 2018, at its offices in Crystal City, Arlington, VA. 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. Edward T. Allard III
- Mr. Steve Barney
- The Honorable Janine Davidson (1/18 only)
- The Honorable Mark Gearan (except for portion of 1/19)
- Ms. Avril Haines
- The Honorable Dr. Joseph Heck (except for portion of 1/19)
- Ms. Jeanette James
- Mr. Alan Khazei
- Mr. Thomas Kilgannon
- Ms. Shawn Skelly
- The Honorable Debra Wada (except for portion of 1/19)

Others present:

- Kent Abernathy, Executive Director
- Jill Rough, Director of Research and Analysis (1/19 only)
- Keri Lowry, Director of Governmental and Public Engagement (except for portion of 1/19)
- Gregory Brinsfield, Director of Operations (present for portion of 1/19)
- Paul Lekas, General Counsel
- Rachel Rikleen, Deputy General Counsel (present for portion of 1/19)
- Yolanda Hands, Operations Program Manager (present for portion of 1/19)

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- Peter Morgan, Deputy Director of Operations (present for portions of 1/19)
- Sandy Scott, on detail from the Corporation for National and Community Service (present for portion of 1/19)

January 18, 2018 Session

Beginning at approximately 0900 on January 18, 2018, the Commission convened at the Commission's offices. The Chairman closed the meeting to the public because pre-decisional and organizational matters would be deliberated.

Mr. Abernathy and Ms. Lowry provided an overview of the day, which would include the Commission's public launch event.

In the time prior to their departure for public launch event, the Commissioners briefly deliberated various issues. They agreed that Vice Chair Gearan should ask at least one panelist a question about women registering for the draft, recommending that the question be posed to General Richardson. Commissioners also discussed whether to recite the pledge of allegiance at the start of the event. They agreed not to recite the pledge at the launch event but to consider doing so at the start of public hearings.

Commissioners then departed for the public launch event.

January 19, 2018 Session

The Commission resumed its meeting at approximately 0835 on January 19, 2018. All Commissioners except for Dr. Davidson were present. The Chairman moved to make the meeting closed to the public because pre-decisional and organizational matters would be deliberated. All Commissioners present agreed.

Approval of Minutes

The Chairman led a discussion about the proposed minutes for the Commission's December 2017 meeting. Following this discussion, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the December 2017 minutes as amended.

Mr. Abernathy then reviewed the day's agenda.

Deliberations Regarding Launch Event and Suggestions for Future Events

From approximately 0845 to 1015, Commissioners deliberated various issues. At 0925, the Chairman and both Vice Chairs departed with Ms. Lowry to tape a television interview. Prior to departing, the Chairman designated Mr. Barney to serve as Acting Chair.

The Commission first held a discussion on the January 18 launch event. Several commissioners praised the staff for executing a well-run event. Commissioners highlighted the audience mix, the quality of the panelists, and the presentations by members of Congress. Commissioners believed the event was well attended given other happenings in Washington, DC, on the same

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day, and thought it significant that leaders from different service communities attended the event as audience members. Commissioners also praised the good audience questions posed to panel members along with Vice Chair Gearan's adept moderating.

Commissioners expressed interest in seeing comments provided through the Commission's website. Mr. Morgan explained that comments posted to the current, preliminary website would be forwarded to an email address, and that the full version of the website, slated for completion in March or April, would provide greater functionality. Mr. Brinsfield noted that the full version of the website would enable improved engagement with the public and interaction with social media platforms. Dr. Rough explained that staff intended to code all comments received from the public and provide summaries to Commissioners. Staff could also implement a way to enable Commissioners to view all comments received. Ms. James expressed interest in seeing the unvarnished comments and thought it would help the Commission to know whether its message is resonating with the public.

Mr. Barney proposed that the Commission consider using its Instagram account to allow the public the opportunity to share service-related photos with the Commission rather than the Commission sharing photos with the public. Mr. Barney flagged a legal question about whether this approach would constitute a prohibited endorsement of particular outside organizations. Mr. Lekas agreed to examine the proposal and report to the Commission.

Commissioners also made suggestions about future Commission meetings based on their observations of the launch event.

Ms. Haines suggested holding a panel with local people at the beginning of each public meeting, as a way to steer the ensuing discussion.

Mr. Kilgannon suggested dividing each public meeting into two segments, with one focused on selective service issues and the other on the propensity to serve.

Mr. Barney noted that there was an inconsistent connection on the website's streaming of the launch event. Mr. Brinsfield was aware of the issue and said it occurred at the beginning, noting that the staff would be able to replace the version on the website with a cleaner version from the tape recording.

Ms. Haines recommended that in future events, the Commission make an announcement informing the audience about the Commission's website and schedule of upcoming events. Chairman Heck noted that at town halls, his practice was to say "take out your smart phones, go to our page, like us, etc." Commissioners agreed that this was a good idea.

Ms. Skelly noted the event's success in engaging the audience and advised the team to think about how to achieve the same sort of result in future engagements when the Commission is visiting and does not "own" the room.

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Mr. Khazei said it was important that the Commission have young people on panels, not just as speakers. He recommended that the Commission and its staff also make efforts to ensure that young people are included in the audience for each public meeting.

Vice Chair Wada suggested including a segment that focuses on or includes Millennials. She also stressed the importance of hiring Millennials to the Commission staff.

Mr. Allard, expressing deep appreciation for the staff's efforts to bring together the launch event, recommended that the Commission engage the United Way and its 2.9 million volunteers. He also recommended that the Commission work to engage the faith-based community.

Mr. Kilgannon suggested mentioning organizations represented in the audience; Ms. Skelly proposed that the staff create a visual montage of their logos that each audience could see on a monitor screen.

Mr. Kilgannon recommended keeping in mind the two audiences for every public event: the audience in the room and the audience in the broader public that may follow the Commission on Facebook or other social media. He recommended considering ways to support the Facebook community with video content. Ms. Haines suggested creating and posting interviews to supplement the video of public engagements.

Ms. James asked if anyone from the White House had attended the launch event. The staff was not sure but noted that one White House representative had RSVP'd.

Mr. Brinsfield requested recommendations from the Commissioners on graphics they would like to see. Mr. Kilgannon suggested having a podium mount with the Commission's logo and website, and a banner behind the podium with the same visual.

Dr. Rough noted that based on conversations she had, General Richardson was assessed to be the most accessible of the panelists. She advised that going forward, particularly as the Commission branches out in to the country, the Commission will need to appear accessible and should consider appearing less formal in public meetings.

Ms. James suggested issuing a press release to thank volunteers who helped the Commission in its launch event as a way to describe how that service is contributing to the Commission's work. She said she would raise this with Ms. Lowry. Mr. Barney noted that Chairman Heck and Ms. Lowry would be arranging to send thank you notes to all volunteers and participants in the launch event.

Other topics addressed during the morning deliberations, including how the Commission should engage with the public on selective service-related issues, are covered later in these minutes for clarity.

Legal & Ethics Update

The legal and ethics update began at approximately 1015 and ended at approximately 1100.

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Mr. Lekas provided an update on the applicable legal framework for information collection efforts and the Commission's plan for issuing a request for information or general solicitation, as required by the Commission's enabling statute.

Mr. Lekas and Ms. Rikleen briefed commissioners on the Commission's social media policy. Commissioners deliberated restricting comments on Facebook and other social media platforms, ultimately deciding that the legal team should brief the Commissioners on any proposal to limit or redact comments provided by member of the public.

Mr. Lekas and Ms. Rikleen provided ethics training concerning social media usage, as reflected in the one-page handout distributed at the meeting. Subsequent to the Commission meeting, Mr. Lekas circulated clarifying guidance on the Commission's social media policy to all commissioners.

Research Update

Beginning at approximately 1115, Dr. Rough provided the Commissioners with a research update and proposed six-month plan for public meetings. Ahead of this briefing, Dr. Rough circulated a slide deck. The following notes are intended to supplement the slide deck with salient points from Dr. Rough's briefing.

Dr. Rough explained that she was working to develop specific research questions based on two primary tasks: reviewing the selective service process; and developing ideas to increase the propensity to serve / foster an ethos of service. Her focus is on developing empirical rather than normative questions that the Commission can defend from a methodological perspective that will generate or inform policy options.

Dr. Rough explained that public meetings would be just one form of data collection, and that staff would concurrently be conducting interviews with experts, gathering existing data from external organizations, conducting literature reviews, and more.

With that, Dr. Rough led a discussion about public meetings the Commission intends to hold over the next six or so months. She described them as listening sessions to develop qualitative input to help inform the boundaries of the Commission's policy recommendations. Dr. Rough outlined primary questions to gather qualitative data during these sessions. Dr. Rough explained the primary variables driving site selection, to include geographic coverage and diversity of audiences. Dr. Rough described the value of using census divisions to achieve geographic coverage.

Commissioners discussed ways to ensure that it reaches all public constituencies, not merely those able to attend a public meeting. Ms. Skelly asked how the Commission could reach U.S. territories. Commissioners agreed that the staff should explore ways to hear from those territories. Mr. Khazei recommended that Commissioners and staff be sure to consider what the appendix of the Commission's final report will say with respect to locations visited and people met. He suggested connecting with the National Governors Association and the United States Conference of Mayors. He suggested the Commission make efforts to get on the agenda for

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conferences of these and like organizations. Dr. Rough discussed connecting with Native American organizations and proposed a way forward to reach those constituencies. Ms. Wada suggested the staff consider ways specifically to engage minority communities. Dr. Rough acknowledged the request and informed Commissioners that staff were working to do so.

Dr. Rough then outlined a preliminary six-month public meeting plan. Ms. Lowry noted that the CNAS conference had been tentatively scheduled for June 21, 2018. Mr. Khazei suggested a visit to New Hampshire during the New England meeting tentatively scheduled for April.

As to the format for public meetings, Dr. Rough described the staff's preliminary thinking. Each public meetings would include a "Commission 101" presentation followed by a conversation, to consist of a facilitated discussion followed by an open question-and-answer session. Commissioners deliberated whether the public meetings should have two segments – one focused on selective service, and the other on propensity to serve or inspiring people to serve. With respect to selective service, Dr. Rough cautioned that the Commission will need to determine what the need for the system is, and public opinion about registration and the draft will not address that foundational question. Commissioners expressed the view that even if public opinion on the draft and related issues is not logically required to assess the need for a selective service system, it remains important for the Commission to gather the views of the public about registration and the draft.

Chairman Heck explained that the public meetings would be designed to identify the right and left policy limits for the Commission, and that a second tranche of public meetings or hearings would raise more specific questions based on those limits.

Mr. Khazei noted that there are two potentially controversial issues that will arise in public meetings: first, whether women should be required to register; and second, whether there should be a mandatory service requirement.

Ms. Skelly inquired about engaging DoD and other agencies to gather information that we require. Dr. Rough noted that the Commission has an RFI to DoD and would receive a further brief from the J2, and that she and others on staff planned to meet with the Selective Service System to gather additional information.

Mr. Gearan suggested that commissioners do site visits before each public meetings in order to better inform the commissioners and, potentially, attract others to the events. Other Commissioners agreed.

Dr. Rough briefed commissioners on preliminary plans for the February 22-23, 2018 meeting in Harrisburg, PA. She talked about the goals of the meeting and provided background on the region and the Harrisburg Area Community College. Ms. James recommended that commissioners visit Carlisle Barracks during the trip given its proximity to Harrisburg.

Media Training

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From 1300 until 1430, Justin Platt, Vice President of Media Strategies and Services at Edelman, delivered a presentation titled “Media & Message Coaching” to the Commission. Mr. Platt provided Commissioners with a slide deck that summarizes his presentation. By way of background, Mr. Platt spent 25 years in the U.S. Army and served as a public affairs officer. Now in the private sector at Edelman, Mr. Platt finds time to do pro bono work helping veterans organizations.

Operations Update

The operations update began at approximately 1445 and lasted until 1530. Ahead of this briefing, Mr. Brinsfield circulated a slide deck. The following notes are intended to supplement the slide deck with salient points from Mr. Brinsfield’s briefing.

Mr. Brinsfield began by briefing the Commission on the status of information technology issues. He explained that the initial DoD network had been installed in the Commission’s offices, and that staff had pursued various providers to secure WiFi, cloud-based services, and other hardware and software needs. Mr. Brinsfield noted that the inspire2serve.gov domain was officially established with the U.S. government. He further noted that the Commission’s .gov email addresses would be part of the cloud-based, fully-integrated IT contract that the Commission was in the process of procuring through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Mr. Brinsfield next updated the Commission on the status of personnel onboarding and human resources procedures. He noted that he and Ms. Hands were completing training to take over hiring action initiating and monitoring, which would facilitate quicker onboarding of new Commission staff.

Mr. Brinsfield then updated the Commission on facility issues and financial and travel management. With respect to travel, he notified Commissioners to expect a request to complete forms for issuance of a government travel card in the near term. He further noted that the Commission was in the process of establishing its government purchase card account which would facilitate Commission transactions.

Deliberations regarding Selective Service

Beginning in the January 18 morning session and continuing in sessions on January 19, Commissioners deliberated about how best to raise questions about the selective service process with the public.

First, Commissioners discussed how the Commission should define and make use of the terms “selective service” and “the draft.” Commissioners noted that the Commission’s enabling statute employed the phrase “military selective service process (commonly referred to as ‘the draft’).” Mr. Kilgannon recommended that the Commission not separate the two terms. Referencing Senator Reed, who in his remarks at the launch event said the selective service question was a primary reason for the Commission’s formation, Mr. Kilgannon believed the terms were inseparable in the public’s eye and should be raised together. Several Commissioners recommended that the Commission distinguish between registration and the draft. Mr. Barney

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noted that even if they are discussed together, the language used in the Commission’s enabling legislation—essentially equating “the draft” with “the military selective service process”—is factually inaccurate. Ms. Haines noted that while the public may view registration and the draft as one in the same, the registration system is distinct from the draft, which no longer exists and requires a separate action to be reinstated. Several Commissioners concurred, pointing out that the draft does not currently exist and would require action by Congress and the President. Chairman Heck explained that the Selective Service System should not be equated with the draft, and that the registration database is meant to be used in part for a potential future draft.

Second, Commissioners discussed how to address the question of women registering for the draft at future Commission events. Ms. James cautioned the Commission not to lose sight of this issue. As a Commissioner, she noted, she would want to hear what the American people think about potentially having their daughters drafted. She recommended that the topic be part of every town meeting held by the Commission. Mr. Kilgannon agreed, recommending that the Commission hold a session on women registration at each meeting. He stressed that for the Commission to get to the right recommendation, it must inform the public about the issue and its implications. All Commissioners agreed that this question is integral to the Commission’s mission and should be raised at the Commission’s meetings with the public.

Third, Commissioners discussed sensitivity to issues raised by the faith-based community with respect to selective service and the draft. In this regard, Mr. Allard noted that an audience member at the launch event, who represented a faith-based organization, believed the question of women registering presented an issue of morality in that requiring women to register for the draft would undermine the moral responsibility of males to serve in the military. Commissioners noted the importance of engaging with the faith community and also hearing from people with moral views on all sides.

General Discussion

From approximately 1500-1530, the Commission continued discussions on a variety of topics raised during the course of the two days.

Mr. Allard discussed a proposed trip to California. He mentioned that he had developed connections at the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and the University of Southern California, and with Janet Napolitano, the President of the University of California system. Dr. Rough noted that in considering California and other locations, the staff will be looking to identify a central location that can host a public meeting.

Ms. Haines asked if Dr. Rough and her team could share data, studies, and other material with the commissioners to help educate them on the issues. Dr. Rough agreed to pull together a preliminary set of material for February.

Mr. Khazei asked whether the Commission should undertake a public opinion poll or survey. Dr. Rough explained that she had been thinking about that and needs to consider more the budgetary issues involved in doing a survey and the importance of a survey to the Commission’s

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research needs. She noted that she and Mr. Lekas would be discussing different information collection options, and that if the Commission did a survey, it would likely be during the second part of the research effort in 2019 rather than at present. Vice Chair Wada suggested the Commission consider working with partners on a survey or related public opinion efforts. Dr. Rough cautioned that the Commission should avoid outsourcing survey design, but it might be fruitful to work with partners on any such effort.

Mr. Allard asked if all commissioners would attend all events being scheduled for the Commission. Dr. Rough said that the idea was for the Chair or one of the Vice Chairs plus two-to-four additional commissioners to attend each. Dr. Rough noted that staff would supply a protocol for facilitating conversations ahead of the first public meeting.

Mr. Abernathy asked the Commission to recognize Sandy Scott for his contributions to the launch event and to furthering the Commission's efforts with service-community engagement and public affairs.

Executive Session

At approximately 1530, Commissioners convened an executive session outside the presence of staff. Following the executive session, Chairman Heck met with executive staff to brief them on various requests and comments from the Commissioners.

Prepared by Paul Lekas, General Counsel

Adopted by the Commission on February 23, 2018