

CDP Veterans Caucus
Executive Board Meeting
Minutes of June 30, 2021

Executive Board Meeting: Called to order at 6:30 pm.

Roll Call: Chair Ron Cohen called roll in the absence of Recording Secretary Antonio Chapa.

- A. Quorum was met with one Executive Board Member absent
- B. Corresponding Secretary Angela Scott will act as Recording Secretary for this meeting
- C. 17 people were present on Google Meets, including one caller (Fernando Hernandez)

Approval of Agenda: Moved to be accepted by Lizet Angulo and seconded by Diana Love.
Agenda approved.

Minutes: Shared via email prior to meeting and reviewed during meeting. Modifications were made to the minutes were suggested by Diana – basically typos nothing of significance.

- A. Minutes were moved to be approved by Vice Chair Basil Kimbrew and seconded by Corresponding Secretary Angela Scott.

Committee Reports:

- **Communications Committee (Chair Angela Scott):**
 - Communications Committee has recruited the following members; Chair Ron Cohen (website management), Treasurer Lizet Angulo (design for PR messaging – newsletters, etc.), Vice Chair of Communications Committee Cherelle Jackson (content and Social Media management), and Stephanie Terrazas.
 - Account has been opened with Constant Contact as primary form of communication to distribute communication (emails, newsletters, etc...) once configurations are in place. During interim emails have been sent courtesy of Chair Ron Cohen.
 - Four Special Communication Messages have already been distributed and posted on website as well as Facebook. Messages will serve not only to honoring holidays, celebrating diversity awareness, and providing essential information/resources for our Veteran constituents: Memorial Day Message, Juneteenth Message, Pride Message, and Afghan Message that discusses the Biden Administration's plans to evacuate tens of thousands of Afghan interpreters, drivers and other allies and their families to a third country while their Visas are being processed.

- Add the following to the email list: Jonathan Rines, navy.gov@gmail.com and Greater Oxnard Dems Club, greateroxnarddems@gmail.com, 805 233-3396, Pres. Rick Sanchez, Communications,
- Plans are underway to publish a bi-monthly newsletter that highlights all committees and the work being done by Executive Board Members.

Vice Chair Kimbrew stated that after seeing all of the communication that's gone out from the Communications Committee, he's received numerous positive feedback, complementing our media team as being the best they've ever seen – from design to conception to timely distribution. He received feedback from Pride LGBTQ community who like the Special Pride Message posted, as well as Special Afghan Messaging. Some of the Democratic Party leaders inquired about hiring our Communications Committee, but Vice Chair Kimbrew informed them that the Communications Committee works exclusively for the Veterans Caucus.

Jonathan Rimes commented that he and his wife took a picture with one of the last living WWII code talkers – could potentially use the image in a Featurette.

- **Treasurer's Report (Lizet Angulo):**

- Beginning Balance from May 2021 to June 2021 was \$3,845.65; Deposits: \$4,600; Payments: \$710.00; Current Balance: \$9,735.65.
- 12 New members paid in May. As of May 31, 2021 – we have 194 members.

- **Organization Development Committee (ODC) Chair Report (Tai Sunnanon):**

- Added new committee members; Terrell Jackson, Phil Schultz and Charles Taylor. Looking for two additional members and has spoken to 18 others regarding joining the team. Extended additional invite to Caucus members currently attending meeting.
- Received positive feedback with Executive Board Members during the past month regarding the concept of organization development not only for this caucus, but how we spread awareness of this Veterans Caucus moving forward into a new phase of leadership. From 98% to 99% of conversations have been uplifting, promising and constituents are looking forward to this caucus' new approach. At the same time, from 1% to 2% of constituents continue to lament the historical challenges this caucus has experienced in the past. We acknowledge this issue, accept it, and are ready to collectively move forward. This Executive Board Committee and Committee members is different. We are a group filled with positive energy. We uplift and uphold each other. This is of importance because many of the Veterans Caucus constituents serve in other boards and Democratic Clubs. We don't mess around – no time for nonsense. We get down to business and do it in a collaborative and transparent manner. This is extremely important for every member to be aware how this caucus operates.

- Spoken at four Democratic Clubs in the past month, highlighting who we are and a lot of folks are excited about partnering with us.

- **Diana – Policy and Legislation Committee (PLC) Chair Report (Diana Love):**
 - Met with committee members on June 16 for two hours, sharing introductions and thoughts the committee’s vision and on how to proceed in the coming year.
 - Every committee member will collaborate three bills.
 - Committee consists of the following seven members; Chris Bellingham, Rueben Ford, Raymond Hall, Xavier Martinez, Stephen McDougall, and Jonathan Rines.

- **Programs Committee (PC) Chair Report (Polly Counts):**
 - Working on development of agenda for Membership Meeting taking place in August. Tai provided a brief preview of the upcoming meeting’s themes; Collaboration, Transparency, and Inclusivity. Collectively as the Executive Board is the show of the first meeting and will be transparent in providing each Board Member’s intentions and invite engagement of all members on projects.
 - Discussions are also underway regarding the November meeting
 - Vice Chair Kimbrew is also one of the committee members. Open invitation for other caucus members to join as well as provide ideas regarding how to increase membership. Right now, concerted effort is going toward developing agendas for programming during general meetings. But this will expand as ideas and structure further develop. Those who’ve expressed interest in joining will be added as structure is implemented.
 - Dennis Canady wants to be added to Membership Committee – leans toward education but flexible in other areas. PC Chair Counts acknowledged Canady’s interest.

- **Vice Chair Basil Kimbrew’s Report:**
 - Volunteered his services to recruit new members. Working very hard and has added Dennis Canady to assist in these efforts. Vice Chair Kimbrew will discuss membership recruitment plans in a future meeting.
 - 14 people joined under waivers and 15 members paid were added to the caucus.
 - With respect to the Orange County cemetery, investigated several incidences and also spoke to the Chair Stephanie Wade. There are two different Veterans

organizations within Orange County – one is in Anaheim, and another wants to participate in another section of Orange County. The primary issue of this split is based around money. One of the local council members has an associate who's a developer involved in this situation whose plans are in opposition to a number of Veterans. There are currently 96,000 Veterans desiring burial plots.

- Vice Chair Kimbrew joined the Anaheim Veterans Club and spoke at their recent meeting, along with Dave Chin who's running for Congress. Vice Chair Kimbrew spoke to the club on the importance of joining the Veterans Caucus to expand their voice presence. Several members showed interest in joining the caucus, informing them of two ways to join (via online on website or applying for hardship and request goes to Sacramento).
- Per Chair Cohen's request, Vice Chair Kimbrew also assisted in the request of Frank Noto regarding assistance on wider distribution of news on the Afghan refugee translators who probably would've been killed once the American soldiers leave. The Afghan translators provide a service similar to what the Navajo Nation did during WWII as "code talkers." A lot of American soldiers are also asking for assistance in ensuring the Afghan translators remain safe who've assisted during operations with the Taliban and ISIS. Within a day of that conversation, an article came out reporting how the White House will assist in excavating the interpreters.
- We have responded to all emails regarding 24 hours – either via email or telephone. All who've been contacted are delighted by the prompt response due to the last Executive Board's actions.
- Investigated the number of Veterans Clubs throughout California – via telephone to elected officials, online and Social Media searches. Currently, there are four Veterans Democratic Clubs; three are in San Diego and one of which is ran by Programs Committee Chair Counts. One additional Veterans Club is in Orange County. Originally, Tom Massey was in charge of this and now wants how this effort can be amplified. Discovered a process isn't in place to establish additional Veterans Clubs – yet this is an identifiable need. Currently in San Bernardino, there's one monthly meeting. Ultimate goal is to unify all of the Veterans Clubs in concerted efforts moving forward. Will also work with Dennis Canady on reaching out to all of these clubs.
- Believes creating additional Veterans Clubs falls under the direction of Organizational Development. Wants to work with ODC Chair Sunnanon in galvanizing efforts to create additional Veterans Clubs – first by meeting with all of the chairs. First wants to locate and meet with all of the club presidents.
- Membership goal is to reach 500 members – Veterans and non-Veterans who's looking to assist Veterans. Hope to reach this membership number by end of this year.
- Publicly apologized to PLC Chair Love regarding a specific piece he wrote separate from the Veterans Club regarding rules and regulations. It was not

intended to be offensive and is working on separating his business writing from that of the Veterans Caucus.

- **Parliamentarian's Report (Tim Prince):**

- Initially had reservations about becoming involved in the Veterans Caucus. Enjoys the camaraderie and collaboration.

Special Acknowledgment from Chair Cohen:

- Commended the following for becoming Life Members:
 - May - Antonio Chapa
 - June – Rob Howard

New Business:

ODC Chair Sunnanon is coordinating and facilitating the 2-Year Work Plan approach. As a new body, in a collaborative exercise, each Executive Board member shared goals for the next two years – tangible and measurable within the next two years as the Veterans Caucus. At the end of the exercise, attending members will be allowed to comment and provide suggestions on potential goals.

i. Organizational Development Chair Sunnanon:

- a. Would like to increase membership by 50% in the next year – currently 170 members strong
- b. Partner with 5 Veteran Organizations – let's attempt to surpass Vice Chair Basil's high bar for this outreach
- c. Double the number of Veterans Organization Clubs that exist in California – the potential is tangible with strong support.

ii. Corresponding Secretary/Communications Committee Chair Scott:

- a. Acknowledge and create opportunities for healing that includes transparency and accountability because we need to reach a place of trust
- b. Discuss values with the Caucus moving forward
- c. Invite membership to participate in collective work to achieve these goals

Organizational Development Chair Sunnanon agreed that this collective exercise is an example of collectively working together to achieve a goal.

iii. Programs Committee Chair Counts:

- a. Veterans Caucus should be the centralized Hub of all the Veterans groups throughout the State.
- b. Unifying, networking, and promoting the growth of all California State Veterans Clubs and organizations in order to establish a strong, united voice, advocating for all Veterans and promoting Democratic values.
- c. Within this Caucus, there should be regional representation in the North, Central and South regions of California.

ODC Chair Sunnanon emphasized the need for the Veterans Caucus to elevate its status – come from behind the scenes – amplify voice and reach a better place in leadership and organizational structure. The floodgates have been opened and we’re moving in that direction.

iv. Policy and Legislation Committee Chair Love

- a. Increase Caucus membership
- b. Increase programming for Veterans transitioning into civilian workforce who desire to be Licensed Contractors – provide that service through the Caucus

ODC Chair Sunnanon agrees regarding increasing services to Veterans transitioning to civilian life.

v. Treasurer Angulo

- a. Communicating with members regarding expiration dates – 30 to 45 days ahead of expiration date for membership dues
- b. Question on donations versus fundraising directed to Parliamentarian. If approached someone who provides more money than required membership fee (i.e. member provides \$500 instead of required \$25), is this a violation of the bylaws?

Parliamentarian Tim Prince answered based on the following bylaw:

- a. **Fundraising Prohibition in our By-Laws:** The Caucus shall neither raise nor disburse funds other than nominal dues, and standard or routine costs of meetings (such as postage, other costs associated with notice, cost of meeting rooms, etc.), which shall be promptly accounted for, reflected in a quarterly financial report to the Treasurer" (Art. VI, Sec. 2). It appears the Caucus limitation to raising money to cover expenses related to meetings is designed to comply with Party finance laws.

Our goal would be to connect the fees to a meeting – not limited to virtual – purpose of promoting Veterans purpose.

vi. Vice Chair Kimbrew

- a. Consider opportunities to change the membership fees similar to the Black Caucus – implement various membership levels. For example, the Black Caucus has a Maxine Waters level (\$1,000) and down to Darren Parker (lower fee), so we should consider implementing something similar due to the fact of our need as the Caucus to raise money. Potentially, there are donors interested in contributing to our Caucus based on this new rollout of Action Items and Work Plans.

Chair Cohen stated that as a Caucus, there are very few things that we're allowed to spend money – unable to give money to candidates but can host a lot of events during Executive Board meetings and during the convention. Can also reimburse for things like Constant Contact. However, we can have a retreat and pay for our members to drive up north and visit the other Democratic Clubs – reimbursing at .54cent/mile plus hotel.

Treasurer Angulo brought up the fact that during convention, we will have high expenses such as facility room use, chairs, and hosting a hospitality adds another layer of costs. Wondering how we can raise money but not conduct a full-fledged fundraising campaign. Asks that ODC Chair Sunnanon and Parliamentarian Prince explore options for increasing current funds. Because the majority of the Executive Board members live in Southern California, visiting other Veterans clubs throughout California will be welcomed. Once in-person meetings begin, other expenses will be incurred.

Vice Chair Kimbrew said when he was invited to speak at other clubs throughout California, he's received countless positive feedback. His other goals are:

- b. Homeless – number one priority as a former homeless Veteran. However, due to current sentiment toward homeless Vets in Orange County, Vice Chair Kimbrew was “thrown out” and unable to assist fellow veterans. In San Diego, the police followed and disposed of the food intended for unhoused Veterans.
- c. Directing Veterans with Resources
- d. Assist Women Veterans who experience Military Sexual Trauma (MST). Several women who've heard about the Caucus would like this issue to be addressed. For example, it's extremely difficult for lower ranking servicemembers to formally complain.

ODC Chair Sunnanon inquired about domain of power with respect to whom the Veterans Caucus can assist. “Even if we can't enforce laws, we can at least show how we can enforce our voice. It's important and imperative that our voices are heard.”

B. Open Discussion

- Fernando Hernandez: Proposes that the Caucus lobbies and advocates for military Veterans who've been deported. This is an issue, it's a major problem. Personally, feels that any person who's served in the military in combat, should receive full citizenship.
- PC Chair Counts would also like to see the creation of advocacy for these special issues such as MST and deportation.
- Vice Chair of Communications Committee, Cherele Jackson, works with unhoused individuals assisting those with programs that empower Veterans with tools take care of their finances and transition off the streets. Working to add those resources both to our Veterans Caucus website and newsletters distributed, including listings across California.
- Rob Howard: Suggests separating paid memberships from those that needs waivers. Use active membership as a second layer of recruitment by amplifying engagement and participation in membership increase. Track legislation that addresses the issues affecting Veterans.
- Xavier Martinez: Would like to see things narrowed down to three or four goals instead of 7 to ensure achievement.
- ODC Chair Sunnanon explained that collectively members can nominate up to two or three goals to ensure they're measurable.
- Chair Cohen explained that this topic is in the beginning stages and will be reviewed.
- CC Chair Scott: Suggests goals are distributed for visibility and to elicit feedback from our constituents.
- Nowlin Haltom, President of the Oxnard Dem Club: Would like to invite guest speakers to Dem Club. Recently had a booth at the Pride Parade. A Vietnam Vet and would like to see more membership.
- Dennis Canady: Deported Veterans resonates with him and has many friends who've dealt with this. Establish some form of proactive response to reach out to servicemembers who're transitioning out of the military. Voter Registration – important those Veterans are registered. PTSD – newly discharged Veterans need to know where to go to deal with PTSD
- Jonathan Rines: Lives in San Diego, where there's a large Navy community. One of our goals that's policy related is to be "ear and the voice" for Veterans. AB225 – enables spouses, Veterans, or active to grant licenses to these members and simplify their efforts to transfer military technical skills in the state of California.
- David Brame: Align our Caucus with the state of California strategy along the 58 caucus – recruit Progressive Veterans from the right wing – should be paramount for our caucus. Get data on population so we can accurately set a benchmark on measurability and attainability. This fits the timeframe. Advance legislation or find money to combat tinnitus – thousands of servicemembers suffer from this and can lead to mental health issues. Education – California has some of the most liberal policies when it comes to educating Veterans, but there's a large percentage of people who don't get that education based on the diversity – and now all of these older Veterans are becoming more disenfranchised due to deindustrialization, re-training skills (machinist mate not lost job to automation). Timber and mining industry have suffered and are now disenfranchised

due to de-industrialization and/or automation. Licensing, promoting trade skills, and retraining to these Veterans is paramount.

- Rob Knecht, President of North Chapter of Veterans Democratic Club of San Diego: Setting legislative priorities, working together through the committee for legislative affairs with the Veterans Clubs throughout the State, and listening to the members holistically to truly determine those things that are needed most for our Veterans statewide.
- Richard Valdez, Inland Empire: Wants to segue into what Rob Howard was saying as far as legislation in that we have the largest Congressional Delegation, plus we have four members of the House on the Veterans Affairs Committee along with the chair. We need to take advantage of this work on our Congressional reps with regards to getting them to co-sponsor bills. Nothing is getting off the floor unless it has sponsors. Has been working the past few years, making sure we get our legislators to sponsor bills and same goes for state level. VA in the Inland Empire will be conducting a few Town Halls regarding the construction of the Seabox in the San Bernadino County area. We need to make sure legislation that is supported to assist our women Veterans and unhoused Veterans.

ODC Chair Sunnanon said the ultimate goal is to coalesce all of these ideas into two or three tangible items and will bring back to the membership meeting in the coming weeks.

- **PLC Chair Love Diana** – met with Resolutions Standing Committee on June 22 for approximately two hours. Discussion was on the resolution for *Reduce Military Spending Except Military Pay and Benefits*. When submitting a resolution to the CDP Resolutions Committee, it must be done 30 days before each Caucus' Executive Board meeting or a convention. In this particular case, the next Executive Board meeting is Aug. 25, which means the resolution would have to be submitted by July 25. We won't have a General Membership meeting in between July and August. Per our bylaws, the Executive Board has the power to pass by votes in between meetings. If it passes or not, it then comes to the Executive Board for a vote, then it's taken to the membership. In order to do that, the Policy and Legislation Committee needed to meet early enough in order to bring the resolution before the Executive Board.

The Policy & Legislation Committee met in June to look at the Resolution for the *Reduce Military Spending Except Military Pay and Benefits*. The author and chair of this resolution was invited to the meeting in the event that any changes, questions, amendments required because it needed to occur during that meeting. The chair who's an ex-officio to all of the meetings, was also invited to attend the meeting. In the previous cabinet, there was opposition to this resolution so again both the author of the resolution and chair were invited to clarify any questions or comments. Despite lengthy discussion and extensive questions and answers, the motion failed.

Resolution to *Reduce Military Spending Except Military Pay and Benefits*, the motion

failed with 2 yay and 4 nay. The motion failed and will not come forward to this body.

Chair Cohen was an observer in the meeting and did not vote but was kind of disappointed and troubled that the maker of the resolution did not want to accept friendly amendments despite hearing negative feedback.

PLC Chair Loves says the maker of the resolution still has opportunity to present resolution, but she will not have the support of the Veterans Caucus. Doubtful that the resolution regarding veterans will be passed without the support of the Veterans Caucus.

- **Programs Chair Counts** stated there might be modifications to the August meeting due to continuing groundwork.

- C. Continued Ideas/Thoughts for Membership Meeting in Aug. (25-29). Chair Cohen shared draft for the next Executive Board meeting agenda, which is scheduled for Aug. 14. Agenda will be emailed in hopes of eliciting feedback. The main focus of the August meeting is to address membership. Not sure of date or package that will be used.

Announcements

Richard Valdez made the following announcements: Inland Empire/Riverside/San Bernardino County – VA Loma Linda is conducting Town Halls regarding the facility expansion. Victorville, July 13, Noon to 2pm Hilton Garden Inn on Mariposa Road; Corona/Murietta/Rancho Cucamonga on July 14, Noon to 2pm at Double Tree Hotel, 285 E. Hospitality Lane, San Bernardino.

CalVet is holding a conference call stakeholder meeting regarding the Barstow Veterans Home. Follow-up meeting they're required to hold based on the legislation on the 20-21 Barstow Master Plan. RSVP stakeholderrsvp@calvet.ca.gov held on July 21. Must RSVP no later than July 16.

Chair Cohen mentioned that despite living in San Diego, he actually received medical services at the Loma Linda VA.

Richard Valdez mentioned that he's Co-Chair Community Veterans Engagement Board for Loma Linda.

CC Chair Scott asked Richard to email information to both her and Chair Ron so that the announcements can be placed on our website. We'd like to post all announcements.

Chair Cohen wants to beef up the resources on the website. He's received information lately on PTSD and receives daily information. Oftentimes Veterans aren't aware of the opportunities that are out there.

CC Chair Scott asked if a statement on behalf of the Veterans Caucus be released regarding our stance on the deportation of Veterans – in the interim of establishing advocacy group.

Chair Cohen agreed.

ODP Chair Sunnanon stated there's a plethora of resources and suggested partnerships with organizations such as the one where CC Vice Chair Jackson works and then create a master document that lists resources for housing, mental health services, education. It's more than handing out a brochure, and clicking on websites, communication through all forms is key. This is the beginning of a robust conversation of what it truly means to Veterans actually receive resources. The more places that blast out this information the better. With respect to open discussion, found 29 unique ideas shared among the 18 members present. That same number grows exponentially as the conversation and brainstorming continues.

Vice Chair Kimbrew suggests creating a list of all the resources across the state from county to county and then place on the website. Separate from the Caucus, Vice Chair Kimbrew through his many organization as President/Founder of Broken Soldiers – helped the Attorney General's wife win her seat in the primaries. Also helped the Secretary of State's daughter, Akilah Webber in her run for elected position. For those who participated and watched the slates in this last election cycle, the goal of Broken Soldiers is to get more Veterans and women elected to office. This is separate from the Caucus. Vice Chair Kimbrew and his wife are dedicated to helping Veterans and women get elected. Organization also received 54 bags of clothing for homeless veterans. New campaign is seeking donation of to 1 million water bottles to help Veterans and Veteran homeless shelters during the summertime.

Member Jonathan Rines absolutely believes in commonplace for all resources. CalVet representative recently helped him get his Driver's license Veterans designation.

CC Chair Scott mentioned USC's Master of Business for Veterans Program as an additional education resource that's not very well-known.

PLC Chair Love suggested that standard things that should always appear in the newsletter. On the backside of the newsletter should always list discounts for all Veterans and the perfect spot to list all resources as a permanent fixture.

Motion to adjourn meeting was moved by Vice Chair Kimbrew and seconded by PLC Chair Love.

Meeting adjourned at 8:04 pm.

Signed

Angela D. Scott, Corresponding Secretary

