Communications Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, November 18, 2025

Time: 7:00 PM (Zoom)

Attendees:

- LCDR Rich Higgins, USN (Ret.), SE Michigan Chapter, MOAA
- LTC Jim Sigmon, AUS (Ret.), Capitol Area Chapter, MOAA
- LTC Larry Powell, USA (Ret.), SE Michigan Chapter, MOAA

1. Call to Order

Chairman Rich Higgins called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and confirmed several chapter representatives were unable to attend.

2. Review of Draft 2026 Communications Plan

Rich presented the draft plan outlining quarterly themes, content coordination across chapters, and the use of common legislative messaging.

Feedback

- Jim Sigmon described the plan as "aggressive" but well-organized and emphasized the value of having consistent "Take Action Now" sidebars in newsletters and websites.
- Larry Powell shared that he typically includes legislative links but noted differences in chapter practices.

Discussion Points

- Standardizing selected newsletter components across all four Michigan chapters.
- Ensuring clear calls to action tied to MOAA Legislative Action Center and Michigan Commanders Group.
- Using MOAA National content and "localizing" it for Michigan-specific priorities.

3. Legislative Priorities & Advocacy Messaging

The committee agreed that suicide prevention should be the first quarterly theme for 2026.

Jim provided a comprehensive overview of ongoing federal and state legislative efforts related to:

- Informed Consent legislation for brain injury treatments.
- Concerns about over-prescription of psychoactive drugs for service members.
- Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT) as a promising alternative treatment.
- The impact of poorly managed drug combinations on suicide risk.

He also noted:

- A House bill sponsored by Congressman Bergman addressing informed consent.
- Ongoing discussions with Sen. Peters and Sen. Slotkin's offices to introduce a Senate companion bill.
- Michigan efforts are running in parallel with federal action, with support sought from the Michigan Department of Military & Veterans Affairs.

4. Engagement, Membership, and Communication Strategies

- The committee discussed ways to increase the number of letters sent through the Legislative Action Center (LAC), especially in support of MOAA's 2026 Level of Excellence criteria.
- Jim suggested logging into the LAC during chapter dinners to help members submit advocacy messages in real time.
- Jim and Larry emphasized that MOAA's value proposition for active-duty personnel remains poorly understood, and messaging should stress pay, healthcare, and quality-of-life advocacy.
- A potential idea: develop short video or podcast interviews with Michigan Guard/Reserve leadership.

5. Quarterly Themes Framework

Rich reviewed the draft structure:

- Each quarter should have a unified theme across newsletters, websites, and social media.
- Themes may align with legislative priorities or seasonal observances (e.g., Veterans Day).
- Chapters should collaborate to produce at least one shared newsletter article per quarter.
- The January 19, 2026, meeting will focus on suicide prevention as the Q1 rollout.
- Q2 focus will be Advocacy in Action

6. Action Items

- Rich Higgins – Revise the quarterly calendar to designate Suicide Prevention / Informed Consent / HBOT as the Q1 theme and circulate a revised communications plan incorporating the committee's feedback.
- All – Develop shared newsletter content aligned with the January theme.
- Legislative Reps – Convene a December 2025 Legislative Committee meeting to finalize Q1 messaging.
- Committee – Consider video/podcast content featuring Guard/Reserve leaders.

8. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned following agreement on the Q1 priorities and next steps for coordinated communication.

Submitted

LCDR Richard L. Higgins, Jr., USN (Ret.)
Chairman, Communications Committee
Michigan Council of Chapters, MOAA