Communications Committee Meeting Minutes
Date: April 20, 2026
Time: 5:00 PM
Location: Zoom Virtual Meeting

Attendees

- LCDR Richard L. Higgins, USN (Ret.) - SE Michigan Chapter President
- LTC Larry Powell, USA (Ret.) - SE Michigan Chapter Secretary & Newsletter Editor
- LTC Chris Johnson, USA (Ret.) - NE Michigan Chapter President
- LTC Peggy Joyner, USA (Ret.) - NE Michigan Chapter Newsletter Editor

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Richard Higgins at approximately 4:00 PM. A quorum was not formally established, but discussion proceeded with available participants.

2. Opening Remarks

- Brief informal introductions and discussion of recent activities.
- Noted limited attendance; additional chapter representation (Grand Rapids, Capital Area) was anticipated but not present.

3. Communications Plan – April Focus

- The Council communications plan calls for April newsletter content focused on Advocacy in Action (AiA).
- Content to include:
    - Photos and reports from Michigan participants
    - Insights from Congressional meetings

Planned Action

- Richard Higgins and Bruce Bahr (Capital Area Chapter) will co-author a consolidated AiA article for distribution across all chapter newsletters.
- Target: Distribution by end of April.

4. "Take Action Now" Advocacy Initiative

- A standardized "Take Action Now" communication piece has been developed and posted on the Council website.
- Includes:
    - Links to MOAA Advocacy Playbook
    - Legislative Action Center
    - Key AiA priorities

Discussion

- Consensus: Continued repetition of advocacy messaging is appropriate and necessary.
- Recommendation: Reinforce messaging in upcoming newsletters and future communications cycles.

5. Congressional Engagement Strategy

- Emphasis on encouraging members to:
    - Contact legislators regularly
    - Build ongoing relationships with Congressional offices
- Noted that:
    - Engagement often occurs with legislative aides and staff, who are key influencers.

6. "How to Meet Your Congressman" Guide

- A draft guide is in development to help members:
  - Schedule meetings
  - Conduct effective advocacy visits
- Will be posted to the Council website upon completion.

7. MOAA "White Label" Newsletter Resource

- Introduced MOAA's monthly White Label Newsletter template:
  - Ready-to-use 4-page publication
  - Can be customized with chapter branding and local content
  - April version posted at https://tinyurl.com/43936cbt
- Located via:
  - MOAA.org ⟶ Chapters ⟶ Council & Chapter Communications

Action

- Members encouraged to:
  - Use as a base newsletter
  - Extract content for chapter publications

8. Veteran Suicide Prevention Communications

- First quarter focus reviewed:
  - Topic: Veteran suicide prevention
- Resource shared:
  - State Legislative Exchange Forum YouTube featuring Dr. Larry Pruitt
  - https://youtu.be/u8AoFPjfdhY
- Key takeaway:
  - No single solution—multiple treatment approaches required.

9. Council Convention Promotion (August 2026)

- Chapters are encouraged to actively promote the upcoming Michigan Council Convention.

Key Points

- Use newsletters to drive awareness
- Direct members to Council website RSVP (no-obligation)
- Goal: Establish early headcount for planning purposes

10. Advocacy in Action (AiA) Overview

- Summary of recent participation:
  - Michigan delegation met with:
    - Senate offices (Slotkin, Peters)
    - Selected House offices based on committee relevance
- Priority issues discussed included:
  - Richard Star Act (primary focus)
  - Military CARE Act
  - Shutdown Fairness Act
  - GUARD VA Benefits Act

Insights

- Meetings primarily conducted with staff due to scheduling constraints
- Importance of committee assignments in targeting legislators

11. AiA Participation (Future)

- Michigan funded by MOAA for two attendees annually
- Interest expressed by Chris Johnson in attending in 2027
- Event structure:
    - Day 1: Travel & networking
    - Day 2: Training
    - Day 3: Congressional visits
    - Day 4: Council & Chapter Meeting & Awards Ceremony

12. Additional Discussion

- Value of consistent advocacy engagement
- Importance of sharing materials across chapters
- Need to increase participation in communications efforts

13. Action Items

Action Item	Responsible	Due Date
Draft joint AiA article for statewide newsletter use	Higgins / Bahr	April 30
Finalize and publish “How to Meet Your Congressman” guide	Higgins	April 30
Promote Convention RSVP in chapter newsletters	All	Ongoing
Share “Take Action Now” advocacy content with members	All	Ongoing
Evaluate use of MOAA White Label Newsletter	All	Ongoing

14. Next Meeting

- 5:00 PM, July 20, 2026
- Zoom: https://tinyurl.com/yc6zfhk5

15. Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned at approximately 4:35 PM.
- Chair thanked participants for their time and contributions.