

Military and Veterans Affairs Subcommittee

In person and virtually via Zoom

Meeting Minutes of March 10, 2026

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 9:02 a.m. by Vice Chair Commander Manny Beltran

Subcommittee Members Present:

Manny Beltran, Vice Chair
David Lucier
Paula Pedene

Erin Hannigan
Keith Gray
Bob Dalpe

Paul Aguirre
Nicole LaSlavic

Subcommittee Members Absent:

Honorable Adrian Fontes, Chair
Julia Gusse
Les Presmyk

Jonell Sullivan
Wanda Wright
Sean Stoddard

Gary Vaughan
Sarah Webber
Paul Johnson

2. Discussion and possible action on meeting minutes for February 10, 2026

Because a quorum was not present, the Subcommittee did not take action on February 10, 2026, meeting minutes.

3. Report from Executive Director Laura Terech

a. Road to 250 Arizona Traveling Museum.

Executive Director Laura Terech reported that the Road to 250 Arizona Traveling Museum surpassed 10,000 attendees after its sixth stop. She noted that the Commission decided not to extend the tour and will determine what to do with the panels after the tour concludes, including possible placement in libraries, at the Arizona Department of Tourism's Great American State Fair presence, or in Wesley Bolin Plaza as a more permanent display. Committee member Paul Aguirre shared that the Prescott stop drew a crowd even 30 minutes before opening and described the response as overwhelmingly positive.

b. America Gives.

Executive Director Terech provided an update on America Gives, a national initiative to record volunteer hours in 2026, explaining that Arizona currently has relatively few listed opportunities. She stated that additional volunteer opportunities will be added to the America250 Arizona website and encouraged members to share information about organizations with volunteer needs.

c. My America Campaign.

Executive Director Terech reported on the My America campaign, a nationwide K–12 effort creating a large flag mosaic from individual tiles featuring messages, drawings, and poems about unity, democracy, and being American. She noted that Arizona currently ranks first in participation with 9,833 submissions, followed by Rhode Island with 4,387.

d. Passport250 Promotion

Executive Director Terech stated that promotion for Passport250 will begin ramping up, with further details to be shared as they are finalized.

4. Discussion, updates, and possible action on projects and initiatives to engage military members, military families, and Veterans in the Semiquincentennial

a. Operation Freedom March

Members noted that Operation Freedom March continues to receive significant media attention, including a recent Fox 10 segment featuring the Secretary and “Chappy.” Additional promotion is expected in the coming weeks.

b. USS Arizona SSN-803

Committee member Nicole LaSlavic reported that events involving the USS Arizona SSN-803 will be open to the public beginning Monday, March 17. She stated that a proclamation will be read on the House floor and that on Wednesday, March 18, there will be a spring training game at Salt River Fields followed by activities at the USS Arizona memorial at the same location on March 20.

c. Eagle Scout Projects to Support Veterans and Military Families

There were no updates on Eagle Scout projects because Gary Vaughan was not in attendance.

d. District 11 American Legion Car Show – March 21

There were no updates on the district 11 American Legion Car Show because Paul Johnson was not in attendance.

e. Tentative HAV Veterans Forum – March 27

Committee member Paula Pedene reported that the HAV Veterans Forum date has shifted, and organizers are now considering April 7. She stated that additional information will be shared once the date is confirmed.

f. American Legion Oratorical Contest – March 28

There were no updates on the American Legion Oratorical Contest because Paul Johnson was not in attendance.

g. HAV Veterans Business Summit – June date TBD

Committee member Pedene reported that the HAV Veterans Business Summit is now being considered for July, likely on the second or third Thursday. She added that the event will include microgrants and coaching for veteran-owned businesses.

h. HAV Honor Our Heroes Grand Marshals Campaign – July

Committee member Pedene shared that HAV is partnering with KTAR for the Honor Our Heroes Grand Marshals campaign and is seeking seven veterans to recognize.

i. HAV High School Essay Competition – August

Committee member Pedene reported that the HAV High School Essay Competition will open in August, based on the theme “250 of Freedom, 30 Years of Honor.” She explained that the winning essayist in grades 9–12 will receive a monetary stipend and that selected essays will be printed in the program.

j. HAV 9/11 Tattered Flag Event with Scottsdale Fire

Committee member Pedene reported that HAV now has an incinerator for the 9/11 tattered flag event with Scottsdale Fire. The event is expected to begin at 7:30 a.m. with breakfast and a flag-retirement ceremony, and due to anticipated volume organizers may need to extend the event over two days.

k. 11/11 HAV Veterans Day Parade

Committee member Pedene reported that the 30th annual HAV Veterans Day Parade will feature a new route, as the City of Phoenix is moving the parade to 3rd Street.

l. HAV Pearl Harbor Day Commemoration – December 5

Committee member Pedene shared that the Pearl Harbor Day Commemoration is expected to be a meaningful event, and that organizers are seeking family members of those lost on December 7, 1941, to speak.

5. Call to the Public

There were no comments from the public.

6. Adjournment

There being no further business, Vice Chair Beltran adjourned the meeting at 9:36 a.m.