

Arizona America250 Commission
MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS Subcommittee
Virtually via Zoom
Meeting Minutes of April 14, 2026

SUBCOMMITTEE ATTENDEES PRESENT:

Manny Beltran, Vice Chair Paul Aguirre Gary Vaughan Wanda Wright
Jonell Sullivan Nicole LaSlavic Bob Dalpe Sean Stoddard Paul Johnson

SUBCOMMITTEE ATTENDEES NOT PRESENT:

Honorable Adrian Fontes, Chair Julia Gusse Erin Hannigan
David Lucier Les Presmyk Keith Gray Paula Pedene

NON-VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT:

None

NON-VOTING MEMBERS NOT PRESENT:

Pamela Rinesmith Mary Kay Junis Will Davis James Lawton

1. **Call to order, roll call, and welcome.** Vice Chair Manny Beltran called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. and welcomed members.
2. **Discussion and possible action on meeting minutes from February 10, 2026, and March 10, 2026. The subcommittee considered the meeting minutes from February 10, 2026, and March 10, 2026.** Commander Paul made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Manny Beltran. There was no discussion, and the motion passed at 9:28 a.m.
3. **Report from Executive Director**
 - a. **Road to 250: Arizona Traveling Museum.**

Executive Director Laura Terech provided updates on Arizona America250 initiatives. She discussed the Road to 250: Arizona Traveling Museum, noting that a new bell base with a metal headstock will be placed when the bell returns to the Capitol this summer. There was an eleven-vehicle police escort and a biker escort on separate occasions for the traveling museum. Photos from multiple Arizona city stops were shared, and the ADA lift was used at every stop. She noted overwhelmingly positive public feedback, with the military panel standing out as a highlight.
 - b. **Outdoors250.**

Executive Director Laura Terech also provided updates on Outdoors250 and related programs, including Birding250.

c. Passport250 promotion.

Executive Director Laura Terech discussed Passport250 promotion efforts and emphasized additional collaborative content.

d. TheirStory oral history project.

Executive Director Laura Terech highlighted the TheirStory oral history project, which continues to collect stories across Arizona and asked members to share it with their networks.

e. 4th of July activations.

Executive Director Laura Terech discussed Fourth of July activations, noting that the commission is exploring options to co-brand events with cities hosting their own celebrations.

f. America Gives and America's Potluck.

Executive Director Laura Terech further discussed America Gives and America's Potluck, stating that the goal is to make 2026 a record year for voluntary service. These initiatives involve collaboration with America's Potluck, based out of Utah, and partnerships with local food banks and sponsors such as Blue Cross Blue Shield and HonorHealth. Participants are encouraged to raise \$250 or collect food donations within their communities. There will be opportunities to volunteer and participate.

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.

Executive Director Laura Terech noted positive media coverage surrounding Operation Freedom March and emphasized the inclusion of guidance on how to safely hike.

b. USS Arizona SSN-803.

Nicole LaSlavic provided an update on the USS Arizona (SSN-803) event scheduled for April 20 in Tucson. The event will include a luncheon at 11:30 a.m. and a program at 12:00 p.m., featuring keynote speaker Ambassador Barbara Barrett. The event is free, and attendees are encouraged to register. She also noted that five sailors visited Arizona in March, participated in various activities, met with Secretary of State Adrian Fontes, and flew in a World War II aircraft.

c. Eagle Scout projects to support Veterans and military families.

Commander Gary Vaughan shared updates on Eagle Scout projects, including flag retirement initiatives, restoration and painting of Purple Heart parking areas, trail cleanups, and assistance with landscaping for a veteran's home. He also noted coordination with ABC15 following Fourth of July events to highlight American Legion and scout participation and educate the public on proper flag retirement practices.

d. District 11 American Legion Car Show, March 21.

Commander Paul reported a strong turnout from both the Veterans Administration and the community, with military vehicles on display and successful promotion of Arizona America250 initiatives. The event was held at Sandra Day O'Connor High School and is expected to return next year.

e. Tentative: HAV Veterans Forum, March 27.

No committee discussion.

f. American Legion Oratorical Contest, March 28.

Commander Paul noted that participation doubled compared to previous years. He added that the national competition will take place from May 15 to May 17 in Michigan.

g. HAV Veterans Business Summit, June date TBD.

No committee discussion.

h. HAV Honor Our Heroes Grand Marshals Campaign, July.

No committee discussion.

i. HAV High School essay competition, August.

No committee discussion.

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

No committee discussion.

k. 11/11 HAV Veterans Day Parade.

No committee discussion.

l. HAV Pearl Harbor Day Commemoration, December 5.

No committee discussion.

5. Member share out on upcoming events or initiatives.

6. Call to the public.

Commander Paul shared that Memorial Day events will take place at Fry's locations in the Peoria area, hosted by the Sons of the American Legion. These events will include multiple outreach tables staffed by Legion members and troops throughout Memorial Day weekend.

Sean Stoddard announced a Gold Star Mothers lunch at Texas Roadhouse and expressed interest in collaboration opportunities.

Executive Director Terech shared a logo access form for partners and participants.

Gary Vaughan announced a partnership with Commander Harrol for a Diamondbacks event on May 22. The Coors Light Patio will be opened to veterans, and tickets will cost approximately \$70, which includes Diamondbacks merchandise as well as food and beverages.

7. Adjournment.

Vice Chair Manny Beltran adjourned the meeting at 9:35 a.m.