

Arizona America250 Commission
Military and Veterans Affairs Subcommittee
In person and virtually via Zoom
Meeting Minutes of December 2, 2024

Subcommittee Members:

I. Call to order and welcome.

Chair Fontes called the meeting to order at 10:08am

Subcommittee Members Present:

Adrian Fontes, Chair
Gary Vaughan
Nicole LaSlavic

Paul Aguirre
Pamela Rinesmith

Erin Hannigan
Terry Ballentine

Subcommittee Members Absent:

James Lawton

Manny Beltran

Les Preskye

II. Introductions.

Representatives in attendance from the Disabled American Veterans of Arizona, the Gilbert Veterans Advisory Board, the USS Arizona Legacy Foundation, the National Guard Association of Arizona, the American Legion, and the Department of Emergency and Military Affairs.

III. Overview of subcommittee and the Arizona America250 Commission.

ED Terech provided an overview of the Arizona America250 planning thus far as well as national initiatives (see supplemental).

IV. Discussion and possible action: Election of Vice Chair.

- a. Chair Fontes provided an overview of subcommittee structure and the duties of a Vice Chair, including agenda setting, outreach, and membership. Recommended that the participants consider Veterans in their spheres of influence to grow the committee and bring individuals who have the capacity to assist with planning. No Vice Chair was chosen at the first meeting with the hopes that Senator-Elect Leach, who sponsored the original Arizona America250 Commission bill, will be appointed and share his input. This issue will be revisited during the January meeting.

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

The American Legion is already working on a number of projects, including collecting grommets for the casting of three bells for the selection of one by the new USS Arizona. The two not chosen might be available to accompany the replica Liberty Bell as a part of A250 AZ's traveling museum. Original Arizona bell is at the UofA, could potentially go on tour as well. Some of the USS Arizona personnel might be available to be a part of the Two Lights event. A possible program for co-branding and partnership would be The American Legion's oratorical scholarship program centered on the Constitution.

The National Guard could create content and use a communications/social media plan to share throughout VFW, American Legion, Veterans organizations, and municipal social media channels so there is consistency in messaging to those serving, their families, and the Veterans community. This could also include recognized Veterans charities as outlined on the Secretary of State's website. DEMA will provide a contact list to assist with outreach to each of the military installations in Arizona. The Arizona State Legislature's Veterans Caucus will be another avenue for outreach. Subcommittee members were asked to share social media content to help grow A250 AZ's social media channels.

The National Guard Association of Arizona puts on a conference every year, there would be potential opportunities to co-brand or sponsor.

Discussed the potential to create an America250 Arizona float for the November 2025 Veterans Day parade.

Discussed the idea of a Veterans relay on the Arizona Trail, which could be divided into 250 unique sections and streamed/promoted on social media. This will be discussed as a separate agenda item during the January meeting.

Additional ideas included sponsorship booklets, Armed Forces Day with professional sports teams, planting flags for Veterans buried in community cemeteries, Eagle Scout

projects to support the families of the deployed, working with Scouts and shared projects with the Civic Engagement, Education & Community Service subcommittee.

The Chair and staff provided an overview of the fiscal sponsorship and how the Commission plans to receive funds through a dedicated 501c3. Also provided an overview of the state and national A250 structures.

VI. Discussion and possible action on future meeting dates.

The group will meet once a month, could increase or decrease as needed. Meetings will be hybrid. The next meeting will be January 7th at 9am, then every 1st Tuesday of the month for February 4th, and March 4th.

VII. Public Comment.

No public comments were received.

VIII. Adjournment.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:13am.