

Arizona America250 Commission

Military and Veterans Affairs Subcommittee

In person and virtually via Zoom

Meeting Minutes of February 11, 2025

1. Call to order and welcome.

Vice Chair Beltran called the meeting to order at 9:02am.

Subcommittee Members Present:

Manny Beltran	Gary Vaughan	Jonell Sullivan	Terry Ballentine
Bob Dalpe	Nicole LaSlavic	Mary Kay Junis	Sean Stoddard
Julia Romero Gusse	Wanda Wright	Paula Pedene	Paul Johnson
Paul Aguirre	David Lucier		

Subcommittee Members Absent:

Honorable Adrian Fontes, Chair	Erin Hannigan	Pamela Rinesmith
Les Preskye	James Lawton	

2. Discussion and possible action on meeting minutes from January 7, 2025.

MOTION Corrected minutes of January 7, 2025, adopted with no further changes. Gary Vaughan motioned; Paul Johnson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

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

a. The American Legion oratorical scholarship program.

Sandra Day O'Connor High School has been secured for March 29th. The event will be open to the public. The contestants will be there from 8am to 1:30. Secretary Fontes has been invited to participate. The month prior will be the post and district level

competitions. Statewide finalists will make their way to the national competition in Michigan.

b. Shared communications and a social media plan.

No update at this time.

c. Veterans Day parade float and activities.

Paula Pedene can authorize her nonprofit to approve a float in the Phoenix Veterans Day Parade. Prescott and Surprise are interested in supporting 250th activities. Also contacted the Girl Scouts. They are willing to support and can provide volunteers but will need additional information from Arizona America250.

d. Veterans relay on the Arizona Trail.

Michael “Chappy” Chappell, the VETS Program Director from the Arizona Trail Association (ATA), recently met with Paul Aguirre and Executive Director Terech to discuss the Veterans Relay Project. ATA’s VETS Program takes Veterans outside to maintain and build the scenic trail. The intent is to build connection, camaraderie, and community, so the infrastructure is already in place for a Veterans Relay. Chappy shared that this is one of the most remote trails in the country. Rather than an Olympic-torch style relay, the idea here is that Veterans, military members, and military families could register and sign up to complete sections of the trail between July 4th, 2025, and July 4th, 2026. They typically serve about 100 to 120 Veterans a year, so the goal will be to try for 250. The trail is non-motorized, but mountain bikes are allowed. Chappy is also working with Ability360 on accessibility for relevant portions of the trail. He is looking to provide equine support for Vets to do sections of the trail on horseback. This could be a leaderboard-style competition. Scouts and Girl Scouts could join as well.

e. USS Arizona SSN-803 collaboration.

The USS Arizona crew will not be able to attend the Two Lights event on April 18, 2025, but they will be in Tucson Monday through Saturday. USS Tucson members and other personnel will be present. Commander Beltran will be meeting with the crew in Tombstone on Wednesday. Gary Vaughan reported that there is a delay with the group collecting grommets for the ship’s bell.

f. Arizona State Legislature Veterans Caucus.

Bob Dalpe connected the Secretary’s Office with members of the Caucus to discuss presenting.

g. National Guard Association of Arizona conference.

Booth space will be available for A250 AZ on Saturday, April 26th.

h. Armed Forces Day with professional sports teams.

As a former Marine, the Secretary is invited to throw out the first pitch for an upcoming Diamondbacks game. Gary Vaughan is also working with the Cardinals and has already secured 3000 tickets for Veterans, which includes opportunities for them to be out on the field for flag ceremonies. A particular game has not been designated yet through the NFL.

i. Planting flags for Veterans in community cemeteries.

National and state cemeteries could also use help. Looking to get or create a comprehensive list.

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

Gary Vaughan has been in contact with the Grand Canyon Council in the Phoenix area as well as with the Catalina Council in the Tucson area. Looking to get in contact with the Las Vegas Council that handles the northern part of the state. Finding ways to get requests in to pass those along to those looking for service projects. Paula Pedene shared that it would be great to get the Scouts involved with the flag project for the cemeteries.

k. Shared projects with the Civic Engagement, Education & Community Service and Travel & Tourism subcommittee.

The Executive Director reported crossover with the Civic Engagement subcommittee and merit badge projects with Scouts. Travel and Tourism is ready to promote many of the projects Military & Veterans Affairs is planning, such as Veterans memorials, historical sites, and the Veterans Relay on the Arizona Trail. Julia Gusse asked if there is an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with A250 AZ and the Department of Tourism, and Deputy General Counsel said that we are still discussing whether an IGA is too formal an arrangement for the purposes of collaboration.

l. Updates from subcommittee members on additional events to promote and co-brand.

Terry Ballentine mentioned the state Disabled American Veterans annual convention on 26-29 June in Mesa. Chris Lawrence shared the Fort Huachuca Military Installation ball on June 14th. Mary Kay Junis shared the Ability360 Valentine Ruck March on February 14th. The ED shared information about a planned community calendar for partner events

on the eventual website. Information was shared regarding the Two Lights for Tomorrow Arizona America250 kickoff event on April 18, 2025.

4. Report from Executive Director.

a. National A250 initiatives related to Military & Veterans.

A250's federal partnerships team works closely with the Department of Defense as an Ex Officio partner and are pleased to share some key initiatives already in the pipeline that align with military and Veterans' commemoration efforts. See Service Commemoration Activities below.

- **Navy/Marine Corps 250:**

Navy and Marine Corps are planning 250th birthday events in Fall 2025, in conjunction with *Homecoming 250* in Philadelphia, PA. These include ship tours, media events, and live demonstrations, alongside an international maritime exercise (Norfolk, VA), an international sea power symposium (Newport, RI), and bi-coastal Fleet Weeks (locations TBD).

- **Army 250 & RevWar 250:**

The Army is commemorating its 250th birthday with *Army Birthday Week* festivities in Washington, DC, during Summer 2025, complemented by local events at installations, commands, and historic locations nationwide. The U.S. Army Center for Military History is also leading *Revolutionary War 250* activities at various battlefield sites.

- **SAIL 250 & INR 250:**

The Navy will host an *International Naval Review* in New York Harbor on July 4, 2026, featuring a traveling flotilla of Tall Ships starting in New Orleans and moving through Norfolk, Baltimore, NYC, and concluding in Boston.

5. Discussion and possible action on 2025 meeting dates

The Vice Chair suggested every second Tuesday for the subcommittee's meetings. Virtual meetings are okay with the group on those dates.

6. Public Comment.

Public comments sharing event information, see 31.

7. Adjournment.

Adjourned at 9:53am.