

Military / Veterans' Law Section of the State Bar of Michigan

Minutes from Annual Meeting – January 24, 2014

Location: State bar of Michigan Building, Lansing, Michigan

Lunch started at Noon

12:45 pm, Lt. Col. Wojcik began opening comments with introductions of Heather Spielmaker and Judge David Jordon who along with Wojcik, founded this section of the SBM.

He then talked about what the section hopes to accomplish with regards to:

Veteran's Treatment Courts, Pro bono, Education and Training, and Writing Panel.

He mentioned that Michigan does not have a active duty base for service members which means that coordinating resources for our returning troops is especially important.

He also stated he would like to see the November issue of the State Bar journal be dedicated to Veteran's issues.

Heather Spielmaker briefed that, as of Wednesday, January 22, 2014 the section had 140 attorney members, 20 student members and 1 legal assistant member. The section is free to student members and new attorneys. The treasury report was that the section had \$2800.00 in dues. The catering and other expenses related to the annual meeting will total approximately \$500.00, leaving the treasury with around \$2300.00.

All attendees introduced themselves, including:

Terry Angle, David Bedells, Hon. Terrence Bronson, Robert Burke, James Carey, Margaret Costello, Kristine Derro, Robert Farnette, Ashley Gautreau, Robert Golob, Dana Graham, Lori Herr, Jeremy Henner, Thomas Hetchler, Hon. David Jordon (retired), Mandy Kelly, Kathy Lawrence, Michael McDaniel, Jason McNally, John Nussbaumer, Heidi Page, Katie Page, Steve Schultz, Robert Sharkey, Heather Spielmaker, Michael Viterna, Lt. Col. Wojcik and the section's assigned commissioner, Greg Ulrich.

A motion was made to amend the By-Laws that wherever it said Military Law it also meant Veterans Law. The motion was made by David Jordon, seconded by Robert Farnette and the motion was passed unanimously.

A Motion was made by Judge Bronson and seconded by Robert Farnette that they forego the first round of elections and accept the 11 interested members to the 11 available council seats (7 council member and 4 officers). Terry Angle and Heather Spielmaker voted nay, and Lori Herr abstained from voting. Jim Carey then brought up that because it was not unanimous that they should proceed as stated in the by-laws as how to pick council members. Judge Bronson then withdrew his motion.

Terry Angle made a motion to have secret ballots, Peggy Costello seconded the motion and it was passed.

The counters for the ballots were chosen and assisted by SBM staff. The counters were Heidi Page, Terry Angle, Dana Graham, Dave Jordan.

Judge Jordan made a motion that results were to be available only to the counters and the persons elected. Terry Angle seconded that motion. It was passed.

Heather Spielmaker gave the candidates five minutes each to talk about their qualifications for council positions, though no one spoke on their qualifications. Jeremy Henner discussed the qualifications of Jodi Switalski, who was running for council but was not present to speak on her own behalf.

The section members who were present, voted for the 7 person council by secret ballot. The votes were tallied in secret by the counters and SBM staff.

The 7 Council names were then announced as Margaret (Peggy) Costello, Thomas Hetchler, Mike McDaniel, Heather Spielmaker, Jodi Switalski, Mike Viterna, John Wojcik.

The topic of what to do with the ballots after the vote was raised, a motion was made to shred ballots was made by Jim Carey, and seconded by Heather Spielmaker. The motion was passed.

The seven members then went to a different room to select officers. Margaret Costello read the names of the officers.

Chair John Wojcik  
Vice-Chair Tom Hetchler  
Secretary Heather Spielmaker  
Treasury Mike Viterna

The Officers then appointed their replacements for the council as follows:

John Wojcik appointed Robert Farnette  
Tom Hetchler appointed Jeremy Henner  
Heather Spielmaker appointed Mike Shelton  
Mike Viterna appointed Robert Sharkey

The State Bar employees then asked one more time if any of the qualified members wanted to see the ballots before they were shredded, no one did. So Heather Spielmaker made a motion that the ballots be shredded at that time. The motion was seconded by Robert Farnette and passed.

Katie Page then spoke about the Veteran's Centers and what type of things they offered. Here is some of the highlights her talk:

13% of veterans WITHOUT PTSD engage in partner violence  
33% of veterans WITH PTSD engage in partner violence. Another way of saying that is veterans with PTSD are 2-3x more likely to engage in partner violence. Also rates of partner violence among OIF/OEF veterans are similar to that of Vietnam veterans, which suggests that PTSD heightens the risk for partner violence acutely and also, if not treated successfully, may prevent age expected declines with this behavior.  
An updated description of the symptoms of PTSD can be found at the link below.

[http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/PTSD-overview/basics/symptoms\\_of\\_ptsd.asp](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/PTSD-overview/basics/symptoms_of_ptsd.asp)

Other risk factors that are key with veterans: Alcohol abuse/dependence, Depression, Marital Satisfaction.

Alcohol abuse is the most commonly occurring co-morbid condition with PTSD.

1-2/3 of veterans with PTSD have lifetime rates of depression.

Rates of divorce are doubled for veterans with PTSD (in comparison to other veterans). And veterans with PTSD are 3x more likely to divorce 2 or more times.

The veteran centers are for combat veterans and their families who has a veteran who is adjusting back to civilian life from a war zone.

Their services are free. They do not give medical help or dispense medicines.

They will help veterans navigate through the hospital system.

Also, please see the website in my signature for further information on the Vet Center, including the Vet Center treatment locator. And please feel free to let attendees know that I'd be happy to forward them information about the Vet Center upon request.

Veterans Crisis Hotline – [1-800-273-8255](tel:1-800-273-8255)

VA Coaching into Care Program- [1-800-823-7458](tel:1-800-823-7458)

Katherine Page, MSW, LMSW  
Readjustment Counselor  
Macomb County Vet Center  
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Clinton Twp, MI 48038  
(586) 412-0107  
[www.vetcenter.va.gov](http://www.vetcenter.va.gov)

LTC Wojcik announced that Mr. Jeffrey Cassidy, Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency, was unable to attend.

John Wojcik then talked about the committees that were on the agenda and it was decided to have five committees instead.

1. Veteran's Treatment Courts
2. Pro Bono
3. Education, Training and Outreach
4. Writing Panel
5. Veteran's Benefit Law

David Jordon made a motion to accept these 5 committees, it was seconded by Terry Angle and the motion was passed.

Motion was made by David Jordan that the Writing Panel committee be changed to Communications committee. It was seconded by Jeremy Henner and the motion was passed.

The following people were picked for committee chairs.

Judge Jodi Switalski would be the chair for the Veteran's Treatment Court committee.

Heather would be the chair for the Pro Bono committee.

Mike McDaniel would be the chair for the Education, Training and Outreach committee.

Terry Angle would be the chair for the Communications committee.

Ashley Gautreau would be the chair for the Veteran's Benefits Law committee.

A motion was made by David Jordon to accept these people as the chairs for these committees and it was seconded by Robert Farnette. The motion was passed.

The Chairs were then instructed to send in 5 important bullets from their committees for the next meeting by March 11, 2014 at 5:00 pm.

It was decided that the Section would meet again after the next State Bar annual meeting.

The Council would meet quarterly. Their next meeting is scheduled for Friday, April 11<sup>th</sup> from noon to 3:00 pm at the SBM building.

New Business: David Jordan asked that the section consider waiving fees for veterans.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:55 pm.