



# MOAA Arkansas & Arkansas Veterans Coalition

Government Affairs Update

22 April 2017




- **Federal (MOAA Arkansas engagement is important to validate council role)**
  - SBP-DIC Offset Repeal
  - S.339 - Military Widow's Tax Elimination Act of 2017 (Cotton, Boozman)
  - H.R.846 -- Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act (Hill only) – need chapter engagement with Crawford, Womack and Westerman until they sign on
- **Arkansas 91GA: 10 of 11 bills AVC promoted or supported were enacted**
  - HB1162/Act141 – “Workforce and Economic Development”– next working w DFAS to alert 30k retirees and SBP beneficiaries of potential W4 changes
  - HB2218/Act1080 – “Vet Biz”– working with AEDC on new rules and business development for service-disabled veteran owned business; Arkansas Veteran Business Alliance
  - HB1222/SB746 – “Parental education choice” (both failed House vote) teed up for grass roots campaign and ’19 session
- **Arkansas State Agencies actions ongoing or pending**
  - Pro bono legal representation
  - Department of Education – teacher licensing for military spouses
  - Department of Higher Education – experiential learning credit for transitioning service members
  - Department of Health – emergency medical services compact to facilitate employment for transitioning service members/spouses
- **Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System** renaming resolution for adoption by AVC July 2017 general meeting




## 2017 Legislative Session Arkansas Veterans Coalition Actions

As of 7 April 2017 after 91<sup>st</sup> General Assembly Regular Session Adjournment

Source: <http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2017/2017R/Pages/Home.aspx>

Status	Bill/Act	Proponent	Sponsor/Cosponsor
1 Enacted 	SB244 (Act 281)	Marine Corps League Department of Arkansas	Sen Eddie Joe Williams

**"Gold Star Monument"** -- Gold Star Family Memorial Monument enacted making Arkansas thirtieth state w monument but ONLY state with its monument on its Capitol grounds

2 Enacted 	SB278 (Act 471)	National Guard Assn of Arkansas & Enlisted Assn of Arkansas National Guard	Sen Jake Files
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**"Guard Tuition Initiative"** -- Tuition assistance for soldiers and airman of Arkansas National Guard making 2 or 4-year programs at no cost to the Guardsman. Recruiting and readiness priority.

3 Enacted 	HB1372 (Act 528)	DSLO w AVC	Rep Charlene Fite
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**"DSLO 2017 #1"** – Provide notice of child maltreatment to DoD installation family advocacy contact

4 Enacted 	HB1162 (Act 141)	AVC	Rep Charlene Fite Sen Jane English
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**"Workforce and Economic Development"** -- Exempts uniformed services retired pay from Arkansas income tax effective 1 Jan 18


5 Enacted 	HB1184 (Act 248)	AVC	Rep David Meeks Sen Eddie Joe Williams
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**"May to Shall"** -- 'All state boards and commissions shall promulgate rules ...' to ensure expedited licensure of members of armed forces, veterans and military spouses.' (fixing DSLO legis from '15)


6 Enacted 	HB2218 (Act 1080)	AVC	Rep Michelle Gray, Rep Vivian Flowers Sen Missy Irvin
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**"Vet Biz"** -- Amends Minority Bus Dev Act, adds women-owned biz, moves service-disabled veteran-owned biz development from DFA to AEDC, eliminates exempt contracts, better reporting and oversight

Status	Bill/Act	Proponent	Sponsor/Cosponsor
7 Enacted 	SB773 (Act 947)	AVC	Sen Dave Wallace Rep Marcus Richmond
<p><b>“Amend IST”</b> -- Amend in-state tuition initiative (2015) providing for veterans w honorable discharge and adding ROTC cadets w DoD contract. Honorable discharge prerequisite driven by legislature and Univ of Arkansas. Arkansas has broadest IST eligibility statute in country, beyond VACAA Sec 702.</p>			

8 Enacted 	HB1775 (Act 811)	Suicide Prevention Advocates and AVC	Rep Bob Johnson Sen Jane English
<p><b>“ADH Suicide Hotline”</b> -- Establish Arkansas Suicide Prevention Hotline. <b>Background:</b> Arkansas 10<sup>th</sup> worst suicide rate, no call center. Partners w Arkansas Suicide Prevention Network, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and Veterans Mental Health Council (AVC member org).</p>			

9 Both bills failed House passage	HB1222 SB746	Parental education choice groups and AVC	Sen Blake Johnson Rep Jim Dotson
<p><b>“Parental Choice”</b> – Education savings accounts establish the <b>PARENTAL CHOICE PILOT PROGRAM</b> <b>Background:</b> Private funded education savings accounts for disadvantaged and military children to give parents a choice. Sponsor added non-resident mil kids at our request. Will be back in 2019.</p>			

10 Enacted 	HB2198 (Act 807)	Member initiative w AVC	Rep George McGill
<p><b>“Uniform Data Collection”</b> – Create a uniform data collection to locate veterans in Arkansas to ensure appropriate services are provided for veterans and military families <b>Background:</b> Will work w proponents. AVC views legislation is viewing an ‘elephant through a straw’. Partial, second-hand data ADVA will get of veteran interaction with other agencies of interaction will be minimal in determining needs. ADVA use of state data to address individual veteran issues may divert ADVA from its three statutory missions. The CA and NC studies that drove this legislation reveal a much larger effort than would be resolved through a state government data collection. Veterans and military families have more interfaces and needs solutions outside the state government.</p>			

11 Enacted 	HB1910 (Act 959)	Member initiative w AVC	Rep Clarke Tucker
<p><b>“Vet civilian jobs”</b> – ADVA and ADWS ‘encouraged’ to establish online capabilities to translate military credentials for transitioning service members; informing state agencies of capabilities. <b>Background:</b> Initiative originated from National Conference of State Legislatures. AVC pledges its involvement w/education and other workforce initiatives consolidated with existing statute.</p>			



## Arkansas Veterans Coalition

**Resolution 2017 – 1**

**Date:** 15 March 2017

**Objective:** For the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) to rename the Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System the **Greater Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System**.

### **The Arkansas Veterans Coalition contends:**

- From an external perspective the proposed name better reflects the preponderance of veterans CAVHS serves residing beyond Central Arkansas.
- From an internal perspective the proposed name recognizes the number of CAVHS facilities and staff stationed outside Central Arkansas and the commitment of leadership and entire system staff reflecting its outreach from border to border north, south, east and west serving veterans in two-thirds of Arkansas counties.

### **Deliberation:**

The Arkansas Veterans Coalition and its member organizations represent 249 thousand Arkansas veterans and their families. Renaming the system is more than symbolic. Renaming sends a message to veterans and providers that VHA recognizes the large rural veteran population and establishes a clear picture that the catchment territory is also its operating territory.

The Arkansas Veterans Coalition finds that...

**WHEREAS**, CAVHS serves the healthcare needs of 149 thousand Arkansas veterans living in its 46-county catchment territory;<sup>1</sup>

**WHEREAS**, 63 thousand Arkansas veterans live in Central Arkansas as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as the 6-county Little Rock – North Little Rock – Conway Metropolitan Statistical Area (Pulaski, Saline, Faulkner, Lonoke, Grant and Perry);

**WHEREAS**, 86 thousand Arkansas veterans live in the 40 CAVHS counties outside Central Arkansas;

**WHEREAS**, in Central Arkansas CAVHS operates two major medical centers (McClellan VAMC, Tobin VAMC), one community-based outpatient clinic (Conway) and a day treatment center (Little Rock);

**WHEREAS**, outside Central Arkansas CAVHS operates seven community-based outpatient clinics (El Dorado, Hot Springs, Mena, Mountain Home, Pine Bluff, Russellville and Searcy) serving Arkansas rural county veterans;

**WHEREAS**, the VHA named CAVHS before it established community-based outpatient clinics across Arkansas;

**THEREFORE**, in recognition of the larger veteran population residing outside Central Arkansas along with the number of VHA facilities and professional staff also based outside Central Arkansas to serve the primary care needs of Arkansas rural veterans;

**BE IT RESOLVED** to promote stronger ties between Arkansas veterans from Mountain Home to El Dorado and Mena to Monticello the Arkansas Veterans Coalition and its member organizations request the Arkansas Congressional Delegation pursue Federal legislation for VHA to change the name of its Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System to the Greater Arkansas Healthcare System.

A copy of this resolution will be delivered to the office of each member of the Arkansas Congressional Delegation.

Motion: (name, organization)

Second: (name, organization)

Roll Call Vote by Member Organization: YEA: \_\_\_\_\_ NAY: \_\_\_\_\_ NO VOTE: \_\_\_\_\_ PRESENT: \_\_\_\_\_

List of organization members

Be it resolved,

Dwight Witcher  
President

CC:

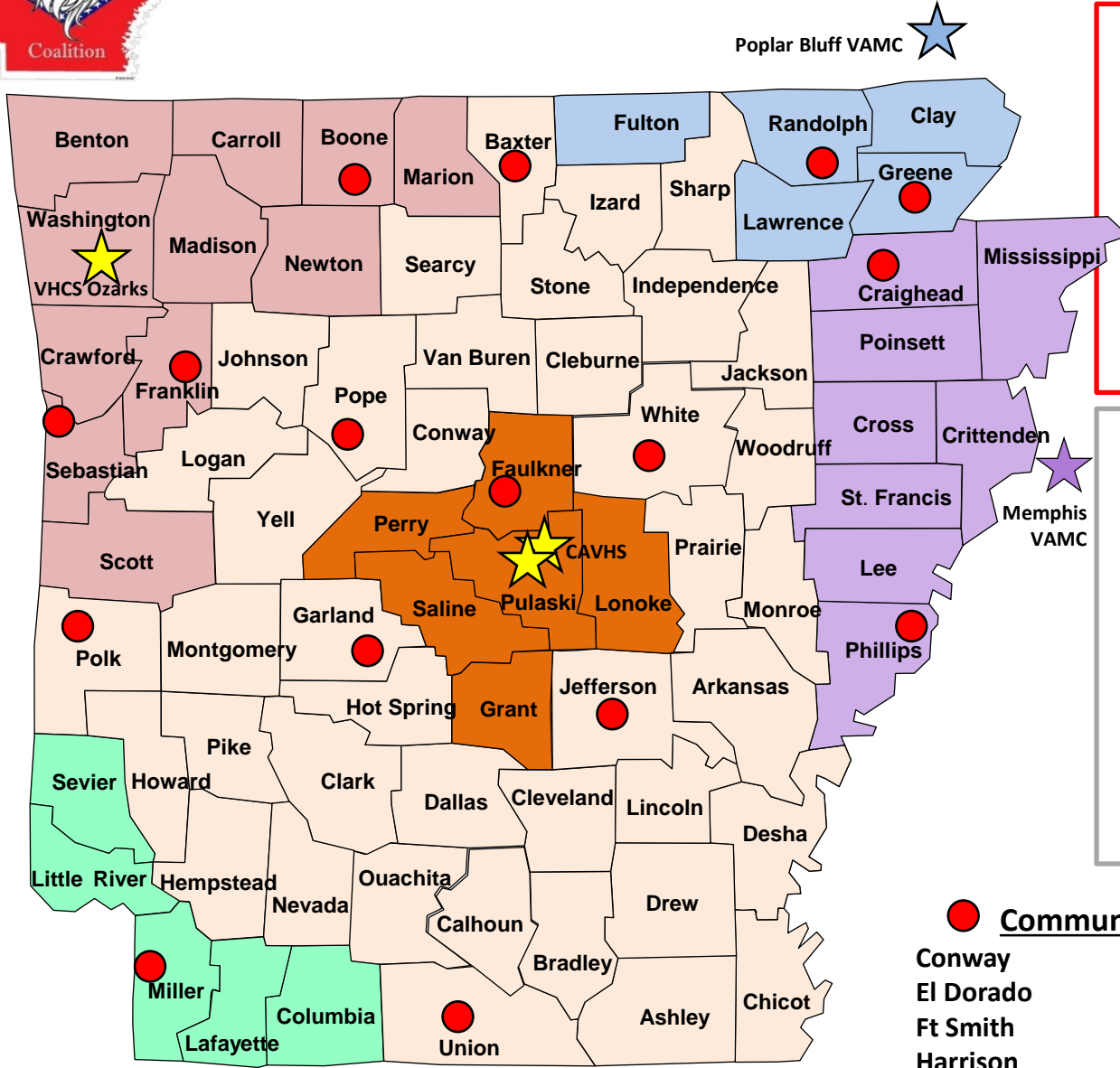
Dr. Margie Scott  
Director  
Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System

<sup>1</sup> the balance of the 249 thousand Arkansas veterans receive health care coverage through VHA facilities in Fayetteville, AR; Memphis, TN; Poplar Bluff, MO and Shreveport, LA;



# Central Greater Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System

The majority of CAVHS-assigned veterans live outside Central Arkansas



**Central Arkansas Veteran Healthcare System**  
(46 counties, 149k vets)

- 6** Central Arkansas -- defined by CENSUS as the LR-NLR-Conway Metropolitan Statistical Area (6 counties w 63k vets)
- 40** Rest of CAVHS catchment area (40 counties w 86k vets)

**Rest of Arkansas**

- 11** VHCS-Ozarks (Fayetteville) (11 counties, 62k vets)
- 5** Pershing VAMC (Poplar Bluff) (5 counties, 9k vets)
- 8** Memphis VAMC (Memphis) (8 counties, 21k vets)
- 5** Brooks VAMC (Shreveport) (5 counties, 8k vets)

- Community Based Outpatient Clinics**
- |             |               |              |
|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| Conway      | Jonesboro     | Pocahontas   |
| El Dorado   | Mena          | Russellville |
| Ft Smith    | Mountain Home | Searcy       |
| Harrison    | Ozark         | Texarkana    |
| Helena      | Paragould     |              |
| Hot Springs | Pine Bluff    |              |

Shreveport VAMC