

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON VETERANS, MILITARY AFFAIRS, AND PUBLIC PROTECTION

Minutes of the 4th Meeting of the 2023 Interim

September 27, 2023

Call to Order and Roll Call

The fourth meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public Protection was held on September 27, 2023, at 11:00 AM in Room 154 of the Capitol Annex. Senator Rick Girdler, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Senator Rick Girdler Co-Chair; Representative Walker Thomas Co-Chair; Senators Karen Berg, Gary Boswell, Matthew Deneen, Denise Harper Angel, Jimmy Higdon, Stephen Meredith, Gex Williams, and Mike Wilson; Representatives Steve Bratcher, Stephanie Dietz, Myron Dossett, Chris Freeland, Jim Gooch Jr., Mark Hart, DJ Johnson, Matthew Koch, Scott Lewis, Candy Massaroni, Marianne Proctor, Scott Sharp, Sarah Stalker, Pamela Stevenson, Ashley Tackett Laferty, and Bill Wesley.

Guests: Kyle Cummins, Chief Helicopter Pilot, Director of Aviation - Rotorcraft; Colonel (Ret.) Phil Miller, State Chair, Kentucky Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve; Delynn Gibson (Ret.), State Command Chief Warrant Officer; Ben Wilcox, State School Security Marshall, Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet; John Moberly, Executive Director, Kentucky Law Enforcement Council; Van Ingram, Executive Director, Kentucky Office of Drug Control Policy; Tommy Loving, Executive Director, Kentucky Narcotics Officers Association; and Ronald Eckart, Director, Greater Hardin County Narcotics Task Force.

LRC Staff: Jessica Zeh, Mark Mitchell, and Logan Schaaf.

Approval of August Minutes

The minutes of the August 22, 2023, meeting were approved.

Distinguished Veteran

Colonel (Ret.) Larry Arnett was honored by the Committee as a Distinguished Veteran. He spoke about his military service and his continuing work with the Joint Executive Council of Veterans Organizations and was presented with a legislative citation and a VMAPP Challenge Coin.

School Resource Officers

Kyle Cummins, Chief Helicopter Pilot and Director of Aviation for Rotorcraft; Delynn Gibson (Ret.), State Command Chief Warrant Officer; and Colonel (Ret.) Phil Miller, State Chair of the Kentucky Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, delivered a presentation on the potential for veterans to serve in the school resource officer (SRO) program.

Responding to a question from Chair Girdler, Mr. Gibson discussed the possibility of reforming the training requirements for National Guard veterans who want to become SROs.

Responding to a question from Representative Johnson, Mr. Cummins emphasized the importance of veterans for the SRO program, and discussed how their military backgrounds could factor into SRO training.

Representative Koch urged caution around the rules for SRO training and discussed the differences between military service and school security. He also said that teachers should be brought into this discussion. Mr. Cummins said that he does not want to see training reduced, but wants to see veterans' backgrounds considered when evaluating their suitability for the SRO program. Mr. Gibson said that approachability is important for SROs.

Responding to a question from Representative Tackett Laferty, Mr. Gibson and Mr. Cummins discussed how different counties might bring veterans into their SRO programs and properly vet candidates.

Responding to a question from Representative Sharp, Mr. Cummins said that he was unsure whether military rank would play a decisive role in deciding which veterans to hire as SROs.

Representative Massaroni expressed concern over the balance of duties as a law enforcement officer and a school resource officer, and questioned the policies on reporting low level crimes or infractions to local law enforcement. Mr. Gibson and Mr. Cummins said that SROs must balance their duties to enforce laws with maintaining the trust of students.

John Moberly, Executive Director of the Kentucky Law Enforcement Council; and Ben Wilcox, State School Security Marshall, Justice and Public Safety Cabinet, provided updates on the School Resource Officer program, including staffing and training progress. They also discussed the different pathways someone might take to become an SRO.

Senator Boswell said that his primary concern is to have someone on school campuses to protect students, and that future training requirements can be evaluated after each school has someone protecting them.

Representative Hart said that military occupational specialties should be considered when evaluating veterans as candidates for the SRO program. He also said that the program should decide whether it wants to function as law enforcement on campuses or as specialized school security.

Representative Bratcher said that the National Guard and the Department of Criminal Justice Training should both be involved in this process.

Responding to a question from Representative Sharp, Mr. Moberly discussed the rules around law enforcement reciprocity with military police.

Representative Johnson said that Coast Guard veterans should also be considered as candidates for the SRO program.

Kentucky Drug Task Force – Update

Van Ingram, Executive Director of the Kentucky Office of Drug Control Policy; Tommy Loving, Executive Director of the Kentucky Narcotics Officers Association; and Ronald Eckart, Director of the Greater Hardin County Narcotics Task Force, delivered a presentation on drug enforcement in Kentucky.

They discussed the history of drug task forces in Kentucky and reviewed the current operations and funding statistics.

Senator Deneen spoke about the importance of drug task forces and some of the issues they are facing.

Senator Wilson asked that the presenters request a specific amount of money for the upcoming budget.

With no further business before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 1:00 PM. The next meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public Protection is scheduled for Wednesday, October 25, 2023, at 11:00 AM in Room 154 of the Capitol Annex.