

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

Minutes of the 3rd Meeting of the 2022 Interim

August 23, 2022

Call to Order and Roll Call

The 3rd meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public Protection was held on Tuesday, August 23, 2022, at 9:00 AM, in Room 154 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Walker Thomas, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Representative Walker Thomas, Co-Chair; Senators Jimmy Higdon, Stephen Meredith, and Wil Schroder; Representatives Kevin D. Bratcher, Chris Freeland, Al Gentry, Jim Gooch Jr., Mark Hart, Scott Lewis, Bobby McCool, Bill Wesley, and Buddy Wheatley.

Guests: Major General Haldane (Hal) B. Lamberton, The Adjutant General; Brigadier General (Ret.) Charles Jones, Executive Director, Kentucky Department of Military Affairs; Corey Ann Howard Jackson, Legislative and Congressional Liaison, Policy Specialist and Political Advisor, Kentucky Department of Military Affairs.

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

Kentucky National Guard Update

Major General Haldane (Hal) B. Lamberton, The Adjutant General; Brigadier General (Ret.) Charles Jones, Executive Director of the Kentucky Department of Military Affairs (KDMA); and Corey Ann Howard Jackson, Legislative and Congressional Liaison for the KDMA, provided an overview of the recent activities of the Kentucky National Guard.

General Lamberton discussed the flood response efforts of the National Guard in Eastern Kentucky. Service members conducted search and rescue operations, swift water rescues, wide area searches, bridge assessments, and law enforcement augmentation. Points of Distribution were established in Breathitt, Clay, Johnson, Knott, Leslie, Letcher, Magoffin, Martin, and Perry counties, with warehouse operations in Floyd. As of August 12th, 50,000 cases of water and 65,000 meals were distributed to these communities.

Senator Higdon and Representative Wesley praised the work of the National Guard in response to the flooding.

Responding to questions from Senator Meredith, General Lamberton said that units currently deployed and scheduled to be deployed have not been needed for the flood response. As part of the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, the Kentucky National Guard can rely on neighboring states for the sharing of assets if it becomes overtaxed. General Lamberton also highlighted recruitment and retention efforts in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Responding to a question from Senator Meredith, General Lamberton discussed the ongoing COVID-19 vaccination efforts in the National Guard. Temporary medical exemptions and religious exemptions are available. Vaccinations are a medical readiness issue. In some historical conflicts, more American soldiers were hospitalized with illnesses than were wounded in combat.

Representative Gooch commented on the changing guidance from the Centers for Disease Control relating to COVID-19 and its variants. Responding to these comments by Representative Gooch, General Lamberton emphasized the importance of adapting to changing circumstances and using new information to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

With no further business before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 10:00 AM. The next meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public Protection will be September 28, 2022, at 10:00 AM in Room 154 of the Capitol Annex.