Minutes for Idaho Veterans Affairs Commission January 9, 2025 Hybrid In-Person & Virtually

Call to Order - 8:49 AM MT

The Idaho Veterans Affairs Commission Meeting was held on Thursday, January 9, 2025, at the Idaho Division of Veterans Services Central Support Office (351 N. Collins Road Boise, ID 83702) and virtually via Microsoft Teams. Meeting started late due to technical difficulties with the Conferencing equipment.

Attendees

Commission Members in attendance: Chairman Josh Callihan, Art Gimpel, Jinny Cash, Eugene Brown

IDVS Staff Members in attendance included: IDVS Chief Administrator Mark Tschampl, Deputy Chief Administrator Tracy Schaner, ISVH-Boise Administrator Rick Holloway, ISVH-Lewiston Home Administrator Mark High, ISVH-Pocatello Home Administrator Josiah Dahlstrom (Virtual). ISVH-Post Falls Home Administrator Amber Goodchild (Virtual), OVA Bureau Chief Bill Heyob, Idaho State Veterans Cemeteries Bureau Chief Jacob Faulkner (Virtual), Business Support Bureau Chief Paul Spannknebel, Community Resource Specialist Mitzi Cheldelin, Community Resource Specialist Jason Legler, Community Resource Coordinator Marisa McCarter and Management Assistant Kevin Wallior.

Number of Citizens in attendance: 0

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Callihan asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting on October 23, 2024. **Commissioner Brown** motioned for approval of the minutes. **Commissioner Cash** seconded. The motion was approved with unanimous assent.

Division Bureau Reports

Boise Veterans Home Report presented by **Rick Holloway**

October November December Total/Avg

Census							
Nursing Care		Medi	care A	Residential/Domiciliary Care		iary Care	
Days of Care	Avg Daily Census	Occupancy Rate	Days of Care	Avg Daily Census	Days of Care	Avg Daily Census	Occupancy Rate
2,417	78	97%	0	0.0	0	0	0%
2,259	75	94%	9	0.3	0	0	0%
2,406	78	97%	8	0.3	0	0	0%
7,082	77	96%	17	0.2	0	0	0%

Census is capped at 80, and hovers between 77-80 depending on hospitalizations. There is a waiting list.

Customer satisfaction remains high. 97% Satisfaction rating with an average score of 4.85/5. Have requested Pinnacle increase the number of surveys.

DPW – In October, Idaho Power installed new leads from power pole to transformer for building power. This replacement was necessitated by deteriorating lines due to weathering and squirrels chewing on the old ones.

There was a CoVID outbreak. 13 residents and 7 staff tested positive. No hospitalization was required and the treatment plans for impacted residents were successful.

In December there was a check presentation and a special ceremony to honor a \$60,000 donation to the activities department from the Borbonus Foundation.

Questions/comments: Commissioners were curious about what would happen in the event of a catastrophic closure. Response: the Idaho State Veterans Home – Boise has 13 facilities and transfer agreements in place to ensure all residents have a place to go.

Lewiston Veterans Home Report presented by Mark High

Census					
	Nursing Care			Medicare A	
Days of Care	Avg Daily	Occupancy	Days of Care	Avg Daily	
Days of Care	Census	Rate	Days of Care	Census	
1,491	48	73%	59	1.9	
1,497	50	76%	102	3.4	
1,565	50	76%	89	2.9	
4,553	49	75%	250	2.7	

Oct Nov Dec Total/Avg

Census – Medicare short-term stays remain steady, trying to increase.

Volunteer numbers remain steady. Total of 870 hours of volunteering in the past quarter.

Idaho State Veterans Home – Lewiston had a CoVID outbreak over the holidays. 23 residents tested positive and one, unfortunately passed away.

Pinnacle regularly interviews 6-7 residents and their families. Rare that they receive negative feedback. The past quarter they received an average score of 5/5.

Due to bad weather, their Veterans Day Ceremony was moved indoors. There was a large turnout. Eleven Quilts of Valor were presented to Veterans, and two Spirit of Freedom Award recipients were honored.

A resident, who wishes to remain anonymous, donated funds for outdoor string lighting to be wrapped around the large fir tree in the Rose Garden. Home Administrator Mark High and other volunteers hung the lights up and kept them up throughout the holiday season. This will be a new facility tradition.

Showcased a slideshow video of the various activities and events Veterans participated in during the previous quarter.

Pocatello Veterans Home Report presented by Josiah Dahlstrom

Census				
Nursing Care			Medi	care A
Days of Care	Avg Daily Census	Occupancy Rate	Days of Care	Avg Daily Census
1,520	49	74%	0	0.0
1,499	50	75%	0	0.0
1,469	47	72%	5	0.2
4,488	49	74%	5	0.1

Oct Nov Dec Total/Avg

Pocatello Home is steady at 75%. There were 9 admissions and 22 readmissions during the past quarter. Had a slew of recent admissions and expect the census to be 54-55 by the end of this week. They have their highest percentage ever of service connected disabled Veterans admitted.

Oct Nov Dec

Total/Avg

Pocatello has a great relationship with ISU and has had a lot of clinical students placed in the facility accounting for 1,024 hours of clinical hours in the past quarter.

Customer satisfaction remains high, and Pocatello maintained its 100% satisfaction rating with an average rating of 5/5 on their Pinnacle customer satisfaction surveys.

DPW 22600 - Boiler/Chiller Project has been put on hold until spring due to weather conditions.

Pocatello Home had their Life Safety Survey in December. They were deficiency free, with minimal feedback from the surveyors. Wrapping up their VA survey process. Have a QA meeting and should be back into compliance soon.

Showcased a slideshow video of the various activities and events Veterans participated in during the previous quarter.

<u>Post Falls Veterans Home Report</u> presented by <u>Tracy Schaner</u> (<u>Amber Goodchild</u> was in attendance virtually but was suffering from Laryngitis)

Census					
Nursing Care			Medicare A		
Days of Care	Avg Daily Census	Occupancy Rate	Days of Care	Avg Daily Census	
1,795	58	90%	0	0.0	
1,765	59	92%	9	0.3	
1,826	59	92%	31	1.0	
5,386	59	89%	40	0.4	

The Post Falls Census has been steady, currently 59 (92%). There is currently a waitlist. Stabilizing staffing to be able to increase admissions, currently low on RNs and LPNs, but have solid group of CNAs.

Post Falls has a customer satisfaction rating of 5 stars from their Pinnacle surveys.

DPW – HVAC and DOAS issues relating to the original punch list are still ongoing. DPW is still working through the process to resolve and potentially could go to litigation. The likeliest cause for the issues relating to the HVAC and DOAS is poor design.

In November the Post Falls Veterans Home hosted the Idaho Legislative Tour. 105 State Legislators helped honor our Veterans during a Veterans Day ceremony.

The Post Falls Home has been through and passed all their mandated surveys except Life & Safety, which they are still awaiting but expect soon.

The Post Falls Community has really embraced the Post Falls Veterans Home since it opened. So many local community organizations have been welcomed into the Home to honor our Veterans and provide them a meaningful connection to the community through special community events and activities.

Comments: Amber added that she is proud of her Post Falls team. They met most of their goals that they set, and she is proud of the trajectory their facility is on.

OVA Report presented by **Bill Heyob**

Think that we may be underreporting the financial impact our services have on the state. Specifically think we might be under counting. Currently working with our admin staff to see if we can identify the disconnect.

Our statistics don't capture the true scope of the work being done by our Service Officers. Considering an update to more fully capture the totality.

OVA statistics comparing 2nd Quarter FY-2025 YTD totals to FY-2024:

	2025 YTD	2024 YTD	Increase/Decrease
Interviews YTD	5,431	4,733	+ 698
POAs Filed YTD	3,214	3,575 <u></u>	- 361
Claims Filed YTD	5,453	6,916	1,463
Appeals YTD	67	376	309
BVA Hearings YTD	52	12	+ 40
Veterans Seen by			
OVA in Vet Courts	245	241	<u>+</u> 4
State Emergency			
Grants Approved	7	22	<u>+</u> 5

Notable changes from 2nd Quarter FY-2024 to 2nd Quarter FY-2025 and December 2023 to December 2024: 2nd Quarter FY-25 had 3,046 Office Interviews (+637), 2,635 Claims filed (-653) compared to FY-2024 and December 2024 had 905 Office Interviews (+67), 851 Claims Filed (-84) and 7 VA Hearings (+7) compared to December 2023.

Noteworthy Issues Currently Happening with the VA

- VA Closed January 9th for National Day of Mourning/Federal Holiday
- VA has stopped mandatory and voluntary overtime for all VBA Employees except for PMC and Appeals
- VA in a current Hiring Pause. VBA has 2,000 more employees that were approved for
- VA is reducing the premiums on all VA insurance programs in April. On average, Veteran will see a reduction between 2% to 11% on their monthly premiums.
- VA has not released that new rating tables/criteria that were previously discussed (OSA, hearing loss and tinnitus, mental health).

Significant Events within the OVA

- Personnel Changes- None
- WiFi and internet connection drastically improved at the new Mountain Home location, greatly improving the ability of our new VSO position.
- The 2025 Training will be held on August 27-29th
- Continuing to support Idaho National Guard Pre-Retirement Briefings, Yellow Ribbon Events for the Guard and Reserve, Marine Corps IRR Muster, Assisted Living Benefits Briefings, Transition Assistance Program briefs at Mountain Home AFB and scheduled outreaches throughout the State.
- Receiving many questions about the transition of new Presidential Cabinet and how it may impact VA Benefits (Project 2025).
- The new Quarterly IDVS/OVA Bulletin will be released soon.

Veterans Cemetery Report presented by Jake Faulkner

DPW 20-606 Boise Cemetery Expansion

- 1. Memorial Wall Completed, punch list items remain, landscaping to be completed this spring.
- 2. Inground Urn Expansion Completed.

3. Space Force Seal – Completed. Concrete required to be repoured 6 times.

DPW 24-605 Admin Building Expansion Blackfoot

- 1. Final Plans approved through PBFAC
- 2. Awaiting IDOPL Approval
- 3. Expected completion summer of 2025

Veteran Interments

Oct	Cemetery Boise: 59	Cemetery Blackfoot: 8
Nov	Cemetery Boise: 35	Cemetery Blackfoot: 3
Dec	Cemetery Boise: 25	Cemetery Blackfoot: 2

YTD Cemetery Boise: 259 Cemetery Blackfoot: 28 Total Cemetery Bureau: 287

Dependent Interments

YTD	Cemetery Boise: 133	Cemetery Blackfoot: 10	Total Cemetery Bureau: 143
Dec	Cemetery Boise: 13	Cemetery Blackfoot: 0	
Nov	Cemetery Boise: 22	Cemetery Blackfoot: 0	
Oct	Cemetery Boise: 25	Cemetery Blackfoot: 2	

Burial Equity Act Interments

Oct	Cemetery Boise: 1	Cemetery Blackfoot: 0
Nov	Cemetery Boise: 2	Cemetery Blackfoot: 0
Dec	Cemetery Boise: 1	Cemetery Blackfoot: 1

YTD Cemetery Boise: 8 Cemetery Blackfoot: 1 Total Cemetery Bureau: 9

Burial Equity Act Dependent Interments

Oct	Cemetery Boise: 2	Cemetery Blackfoot: 0
Nov	Cemetery Boise: 0	Cemetery Blackfoot: 0
Dec	Cemetery Boise: 0	Cemetery Blackfoot: 0

YTD Cemetery Boise: 3 Cemetery Blackfoot: 0 Total Cemetery Bureau: 3

Volunteer Hours

YTD	2,361
Dec	124
Nov	301
Oct	207

Other Important Events/Information

Group Honors held in November.

Idaho Veterans Wreaths held a wreath fluffing event with 200 volunteers over 2 weekends to prepare wreaths for placement in December.

The First Annual Idaho Veterans Wreaths Event was conducted in December to place wreaths on every Veterans grave.

Comments: Mark praised the work Jake, and his team did with Idaho Veterans Network to establish Idaho Veterans Wreaths. This collaboration keeps donated funds in Idaho to help Idaho Veterans. The program has a low overhead of

approximately \$50-60k. Approximately \$100k was raised through this program that will go into programs that support Idaho Veterans in need.

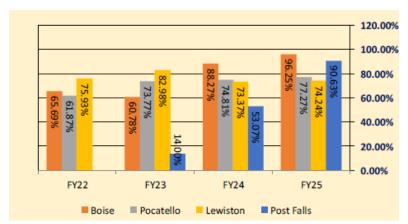
Working with Idaho Lands to draft a purchase agreement to acquire 15 acres from Dry Creek Cemetery to ensure the Idaho Cemetery will be able to serve the burial needs for Idaho Veterans for the next 50 years.

Fiscal Report - presented by Paul Spannknebel

FY2024 End Results

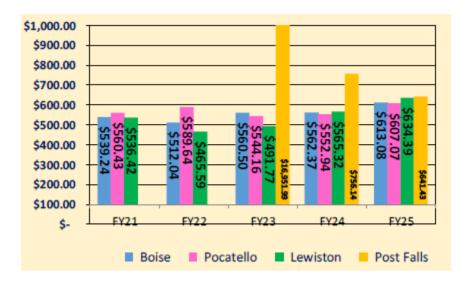
- \$17,566,400 reverted appropriation
 - 13% of total appropriation, the majority was due to State Veterans Home construction projects not completed, as well as staffing shortages.
 - \$20,500, 1.2% of total General Fund appropriation. The majority was due to trustee & benefits not distributed and unused operating appropriation.

Average Census YTD Comparisons between the Homes:



With Post Falls increasing census, the costs per resident per day have decreased to comparable level as the other State Veterans Homes.

Nursing Yearly Costs Comparisons per resident day:



FY25 General Funds

- General Funds are appropriated in Personnel, Operating, and Trustee & Benefits
- Appropriation is \$174,045,400 of which \$1,714,800 (1%) is General Funds.
- \$111,831,300 appropriation is for the Boise and Lewiston State Veterans Homes construction projects, and Boise Cemetery expansion project.

Governor's FY2026 Budget Recommendation \$65,360,600:

- \$568,100 Change in Health Benefits
- \$<15,000> Change in Variable Benefit Costs
- \$<4,900> Attorney General Fees
- \$5,000 Legislative Audits
- \$28,200 Risk Management Costs
- \$156,500 Controller's Fees
- \$338,100 Office of Information Technology Services Support Fees
- \$1,553,400 Change in Employee Compensation Regular Employees
- \$6,400 Compensation Schedule Changes
- \$0 Temporary Nursing Staff (\$1.2 million appropriation moved from operating to personnel to build a temp pool of nurses—zero net effect)
- \$120,600 Information Technology Maintenance and Licensing
- \$133,400 Capital Outlay Enhancements
- \$455,000 Repair, Replacement or Alteration Costs
- Budget Law Exemptions/Other Adjustments Federal Funds
 - \$77,026,100 Boise Veterans Home Replacement
 - \$34,462,500 Lewiston Veterans Home Renovation
- General funds are 2.8% of total budget recommendation; does not include Budget Law Exemptions/Other Adjustments from above

The National Association of State Veterans Homes (NASVH) is working to get approval from the VA for reimbursement for non-resident physical therapy. This would allow our Veterans Homes to utilize their in-house therapy services for Veterans in the community and get reimbursed for the costs from the VA. NASVH is also advocating for full reimbursement of pharmaceutical costs for residents. A Bill is being introduced in the US House of Representatives by the Chairman for the subcommittee for Health.

SWICAP - the interagency billing for Risk Management, IT, Legal, and LUMA

- \$1.6 million charge for IT an increase of ~\$500k. ITS' algorithm for determining cost sharing is broken. IDVS is charged approximately 30% more regardless of our utilization remaining stable.
- Discussing concerns with DFM and the Governor's Office.

HR Report – presented by Paul Spannknebel

Interviewing a new HR Business Partner to fill a vacancy that opened when Angie Hamilton moved to another State Agency.

Change in Employee Compensation recommendation is 4%.

<u>Business Support and Education</u> – presented by **Paul Spannknebel**

Education Report

Personnel – Shannon Patenoude was promoted to Program Supervisor and Abby Edgar was promoted to Program Specialist in August 2024.

Keeping Tabs on the Cooperative Contract Agreement with the VA:

- 1. FY25 requested COLA increase was submitted to VA on 12/23/2024
 - a. Once accepted by VA, the COLA adjustment will increase the FY25 Allocation to \$4,928.00 (increasing the total FY25 allocation to \$202,029.00)
- 2. FY25 Allocation approved for \$197,101.00
 - a. Will submit for Quarter 1 reimbursement before January 31st, 2025
- 3. FY24 Supplemental Request Submitted on December 3, 2024
 - a. Amount requested and under review by VA: \$123,736.95
- 4. FY24 total funding received: \$295,968.92
 - a. Based on FY24 Allocated Allowance plus COLA: \$211,962.00
 - b. Includes FY23's supplemental funding (received 7/10/2024): \$84, 276.92

VA Education Benefits Contribute to Idaho's Economy

FY25 - VA QUARTER 1
TIEV TA GOARTER
Gender of Beneficiary Total Paid Percentage of Utilization
Female \$ 3,070,544.87 21.28%
Male \$ 6,052,000.28 41.94% 2,340 Idahoan Beneficiaries
Not Reported \$ 5,306,369.57 36.78% served in FY25, Q1
Grand Total \$ 14,428,914.72 100.00%
FY24 - FINAL
Gender of Beneficiary Total Paid Percentage of Utilization
Female \$ 10,417,532.70 20.68% 3,508 Idahoan Beneficiaries
Male \$ 23,801,845.50 47.25% served in FY24
Not Reported \$ 16,157,177.66 32.07%

Program Activities in VA FY2025, Q1

ACTIVE FACILITY TYPE	TOTAL NUMBER OF IDAHO FACILITIES	PROGRAMS Approved in Q1
IHL	20	498
NCD	45	190
Apprenticeships (APP)	66	24
On-The-Job (OJT)	133	1
License/Certification & Prep-Courses	8	5
Totals:	272	718

The Education Team oversees 272 active facilities in last quarter, adding 6 new facilities in VA's Q1 to our rosters.

In Q1, the team approved an additional 718 programs since Q4 (at new and existing facilities).

Of the 272 active facilities, each program approved by the Idaho's SAA* requires continuous oversight by the Education Team in way of:

- New program approvals
- Program yearly program reapprovals
- Program modifications
- Program withdrawals

FY2024 Recap

JPRG – Satisfactory Rating, VA Letter Received December 12, 2024

- Completed 100% of all new approval packages within 39 calendar days
- Completed 98.8% of reapprovals within 24-months [VA Target was 90%]
- Completed and submitted 100% of Risk Based Surveys
- Completed and submitted 100% of 14 Supervisory Visits

Education FY2025 Focus:

IDVS Goals

- Focus on increasing approval productivity in 2025, with the goal of completing 100% required full reapprovals by September 31st, 2025.
- Continue to increase program opportunities for Idaho Veterans and their families.
- Implement CRM database functionality for all facility types:

VA Goals

- Assigned 1 RBS (Risk-Based Survey) [VA Target is 100%]
- Assigned 10 Supervisory Visits [VA Target is 100%]
- **New Facility** inspection visits requirement [VA Target is 100%]
- **New Approvals** completed within 39 days [VA Target is 90%]
- Complete all full reapproval packages within 36 months of prior full review [VA Target is 90%]

Veterans Outreach and Community Support (VOCS) – presented by Mitzi Cheldelin

Events

• Idaho Veterans Wreaths. Assisted the Boise Veterans Cemetery in transitioning from the national Wreaths Across America program to a local alternative. This ensured the funds stay in Idaho communities and go to non-profits that directly help veterans in need.

Engagement October 1 – December 31:

- Veterans 625
- Civilians 142
- Mixed Events 4,717
- Events 53
- Counties Visited 18/44

Highlighted Events hosted by Community Partners this quarter:

- Boise Entrepreneur Week, Military Track
- Veterans Outreach Roadshow Mackay-Salmon-Challis
- Idaho Veterans Parade
- Joining Forces at Kilroy Coffee Klatch

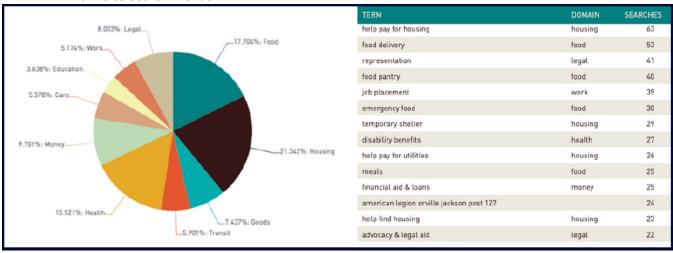
- Boise Veterans Home Hiring Event
- Senator Crapo's Spirit of Freedom Award
- Boise State Veterans Luncheon
- ASIST Training

Contributions through Outreach:

- Raised \$32,643.37 in direct Veteran Support thanks to Community Partners. Highlighted organized support from our community partners and volunteers:
 - This quarter we had many car repairs, rent payments, and utilities as well as assistance for cremation, hotel stays for homeless, and rehabilitation.

Ongoing Projects

- Joining Forces Idaho Treasure Valley, Magic Valley and Eastern Idaho continue to grow, and with Jason in Northern Idaho, the ground work is being laid to implement a Joining Forces Northern Idaho Coalition meeting.
- Governor's Challenge
 - The **Ask the Question** campaign continues slowly and steadily. Virginia Holmgren, from Idaho National Guard, and Travis Schmidt, of the Boise VA, have taken the lead on Health Care outreach. Terry Reilly Health Services have been supportive in providing data as proof of concept. Mitzi made a connection in Twin Falls St Luke's to implement, and Jason has made connections up North with local health care providers interested in better serving their veteran patients.
 - Team 3 Safe Storage has been making great strides in Northern Idaho working with local law enforcement and Veterans Outreach Centers. An Outreach Center Toolkit for counties and local law enforcement has been started as well as information on safe storage.
- Idaho Veterans Guide Report from October 1 December 31, 2024
 - 73 Programs Added (4,400 Total)
 - Local 30 added, 2,447 total
 - State 39 added, 1.067 total
 - National 5 added, 886 total
 - 52 Programs Claimed
 - Top 5 Local Engaged Programs IDVS Office of Veterans Advocacy; Idaho Department of Labor, Job Seeker; Idaho Power, Project Share Utility Assistant; Idaho Foodbank, Food Locator; El-Ada Community Action Partnership.
 - Site Activity: 2,637 sessions; 2,539 searches.
 - Site Search Trends:



Central Support Office Updates

Deputy Chief Administrator's Remarks presented by **Tracy Schaner**

Seeing progress on our BABAA waiver. The Made in America office returned our application with comments. The VA has updated our application based on that feedback and resubmitted. Hopeful that within the next few weeks we will receive waiver approval.

NASVH – Tracy attended the national Veterans Day Ceremony in Washington D.C. During that trip she met with the VA secretary during a working breakfast. Additionally, had a work group meeting about State Veterans Homes becoming VA approved providers for therapy services under TriWest and Optum. Congresswoman Miller-Meeks (R-IA) is planning to introduce legislation that would allow for full VA reimbursement for high-cost prescriptions for disabled Veterans in State Veterans Homes.

<u>Chief Administrator's Remarks</u> presented by Mark Tschampl

The new Legislative Session is upon us. IDVS has a couple of items up during this legislative session

- Finalizing Update to IDAPA 21.01.04 Rules Governing Idaho State Veterans Cemeteries expanding eligibility to Idaho National Guard and Reservists.
- Statutory Changes to Section 66-906, Idaho Code, to bring Title 66, Chapter 9, Idaho Code, which governs Idaho State Veterans Homes, in line with the State Unclaimed Property Act which was amended during last year's legislative session.
- Initially planned on introducing legislation to formalize Veterans Outreach and Community support as a statutory change to Title 65, Idaho Code. The Governor's office supports this change but with the new legislators think it is better to wait until the next legislative session.
- Future legislative that we may potentially pursue would be creating a state funded program to provide dental care to Veterans in need. Still need to determine a funding mechanism. The Governor's office solicited ideas, and we suggested this need. It would likely require \$1million/year in ongoing funding.
 - Chairman Callihan the Boise VAMC has a new Dental Chief coming on board. Suggested connecting this program to the VAMC for post care follow-up.
 - Bill Heyob the VA offers dental insurance for ~\$35/month through Delta Dental.

Mark highlighted how much he appreciates the IDVS team. Growth year by year has been consistent. Everyone is engaged and clearly strives to provide the best possible services to our Veterans community.

New Business

Chairman Callihan – I've identified David Maxwell as a potential IVAC commissioner to fill the vacancy.

Idaho Disabled Veterans Special Big Game Hunt – we are seeing a steady number of applications. This year we have opened the two tags we sponsor beyond Elk to any of the available big game animals. Our Selection Committee will work with the Veteran and Idaho Outfitters Association to ensure our Veterans have successful hunts.

The American Legion/Veterans of Foreign Wars Joint Legislative Reception will be tonight at the Holiday Inn Boise Airport at 5:30 PM.

The Next IVAC Meeting is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, April 16, 2025, in Boise at the Idaho Division of

Veterans Services Central Support Office (351 N. Collins Road Boise, ID 83702)

Chairman Callihan is open to a motion to adjourn. **Commissioner Brown** motioned to adjourn at 11:13 AM MT. **Commissioner Gimpel** seconded. The motion was approved with unanimous assent. Meeting was adjourned at 11:13 AM MT

Kevin R. Wallior Management Assistant Idaho Division of Veteran Services