

MEETING WITH CABINET SECRETARY MEETING
2/4/2026 1400-1515

1. Go over notes of Gary's meeting with the Mayor

- a. No major comments, see below on parade and 250th.
- b. Gary stated the 2026-2029 strategic plan from VAB in progress should be ready for draft review by DVS sometime in next two weeks.

2. Lots of questions as to why no 2nd VSO in Santa Fe (constant)

- a. VSOs based on population density of veterans. For example, Albuquerque has (Bernalillo Co. 55,402) veterans; Santa Fe (Santa Fe Co. 8,698) veterans. **VA VetPop 2026 Data*
- b. CabSec noted during his tenure added 7 new VSOs.
- c. CabSec noted that attempts made to increase number of tribal Service Officers and others (i.e. posts) interested. Set aside 36 slots for training, 7 showed up and were trained.
- d. Gary asked about more training and would push for great input from posts. CabSec agreed based on demand.

3. Review/discuss VIC "state wide agenda"

- a. Discussed VIC state wide agenda – expansion of transitional to rental/landlord based housing and goal to have in-person outreach as well as coordination with local partners. DVS agreed and had it as action item to support and assist as needed.

4. Veteran's Day comments/revisions for 2026

- a. Gary noted need for department flag array on dais as well as screen revealing veteran related activity and events (i.e. Bataan gathering, fourth of July; banners, and post activities). DVS agreed and offered assistance (PIO)
- b. Discussed more tables and PUSH for more veteran attendance at the event.

5. Parade for Veteran's Day

- a. DVS on board to assist noting support from broader community.
- b. Gary relayed Mayor's idea for parade route and tasking VAB with reporting back as this would be a city sanctioned event
- c. CabSec noted prior route from NM Military Museum staging/possible short event in NMMM down Old SF Trail to Convention center.
- d. VAB will put together committee including Police, Fire, Veteran Groups, DVS and VAB to come up with plan and

6. 250th Anniversary

- a. Gary provided DVS with Governor's plan for celebration.
- b. DVS will conduct further research as to Gov's committee and how DVS fits into that plan.
- c. DVS will assist/provide guidance as needed. This is a citizen wide celebration not specifically veteran oriented – Gary agreed.
- d. VAB awaiting more information from Mayor's office/Council

7. Any news on another GVAC meeting

- a. CabSec noted recently had meeting to discuss member loss; age gaps across state Posts/etc. and transportation issues.
- b. GVAC just about ready to publish quarterly meeting location, date/time and agenda for the year. Gary noted as VAB chair he will attend.

8. Commander's Call Carlsbad??

- a. Issue primarily centered around state cemeteries; Taos capitalization; expansion Angel Fire, Ft. Stanton, Gallup as well as the preparatory ("NMDVS received a grant opportunity letter") work at Carlsbad. Also noted were other upgrades, restoration, and continuation of restoration work at state cemeteries.
- b. Commander's Call aimed at gaining input from surrounding Posts and Carlsbad Council. Bringing the various stakeholders together for conversational purposes.

9. What can the VAB do for DVS?

- a. Expand information to the posts to be “solution oriented” regarding veteran activities and events.
- b. PUSH for more action on preventing veteran suicides. According to latest report (2024 based on 2022 data) veteran suicides comprise 17.6/day
- c. Build connections between DVS and related organizations to continue/expand programs to significantly decrease veteran homelessness.
- d. CabSec emphasized the existence of a Veteran Chamber of Commerce (New) Mexico State Veterans Chamber of Commerce)
- e. Continue to be the conduit between organizations, state and local officials and the veteran community.

OVERALL – great meeting, lasted longer than planned but very informative. Attendees included CabSec; Deputy Sec and Gary Donato (Chair of Santa Fe Veteran Advisory Board). Gary noted at beginning the positive feedback from veterans attending the American Legion Mid-Winter Conference of CabSec presentation and especially willingness to hold one-on-one discussions outside meeting room.