

**Department of Veterans Affairs
Charter of the
Advisory Committee on United States
Outlying Areas and Freely Associated States**

1. Official Designation. Advisory Committee on United States Outlying Areas and Freely Associated States (Committee).

2. Authority. The Committee is authorized by statute, Subchapter III of 38 U.S.C. Ch 5, amended to include section 548, Advisory Committee on United States Outlying Areas and Freely Associated States, as stipulated in P.L. 117-263 § 5102. The Committee operates under the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, as amended, 5 U.S.C. Ch. 10.

3. Objectives and Scope of Activity. The Committee provides advice and guidance to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (Secretary) on matters relating to covered Veterans as outlined in section 4 of this charter.

The term *covered Veteran* is defined as a Veteran residing in: American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Virgin Islands of the United States, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau.

4. Description of Duties. The Committee shall:

- a. Advise the Secretary on matters relating to covered Veterans, including how the Secretary may improve the programs and services of the Department to better serve such Veterans;
- b. Identify for the Secretary evolving issues of relevance to covered Veterans;
- c. Propose clarifications, recommendations, and solutions to address issues raised by covered Veterans;
- d. Provide a forum for covered Veterans, Veterans Service Organizations (VSO) serving covered Veterans and the Department to discuss issues and proposals for changes to regulations, policies, and procedures of the Department;
- e. Identify priorities for and provide advice to the Secretary on appropriate strategies for consultation with VSOs serving covered Veterans;
- f. Encourage the Secretary to work with the heads of other Federal departments and agencies, and Congress, to ensure covered Veterans are provided the full benefits of their status as covered Veterans;
- g. Highlight contributions of covered Veterans in the Armed Forces;
- h. Conduct other duties as determined appropriate by the Secretary; and
- i. Submit, not less frequently than once every 2 years, to the Secretary and the appropriate Congressional committees a report containing recommendations as the Committee may have for legislative or administrative action; and describing the activities of the Committee during the previous 2 years.

Additionally, not later than 120 days after the date on which the Secretary receives a report, the Secretary shall submit to the appropriate Congressional committees a written response to the report after giving the Committee an opportunity to review such written response; and including in such written response any comments the Committee considers appropriate.

5. Official to Whom the Committee Reports. The Committee reports to the Secretary, through the Executive Director, Outreach, Transition and Economic Development (OTED), Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA).

6. Office Responsible for Providing Necessary Support to the Committee. VBA OTED provides administrative and logistical support for all Committee activities.

7. Estimated Annual Operating Costs in Dollars and Staff Years. The annual operating cost for the Committee is estimated at \$680,000 and 2.5 staff per year and must be budgeted as such. All members will receive travel expenses and a per diem allowance, in accordance with Federal Travel Regulations, for any travel made in connection with their duties as members of the Committee.

8. Designated Federal Officer. The Designated Federal Officer (DFO), a full-time VA employee, will approve the schedule of committee and subcommittee meetings. The DFO, or a designee, will be present at all committee and subcommittee meetings, and each meeting will be conducted in accordance with an agenda approved by the DFO. The DFO is authorized to adjourn any meeting when he or she determines it is in the public interest to do so.

9. Estimated Number and Frequency of Meetings. The Committee shall meet in-person with the Secretary not less frequently than once each year and hold monthly conference calls as necessary. Meetings may be conducted virtually if determined necessary based on Department protocols, timing and budget considerations.

10. Duration. The duration of the Committee is continuing, subject to the termination section below.

11. Termination Date. Pursuant to 38 U.S.C. § 548(k), the Committee shall terminate on December 23, 2032, which is 10 years after the enactment of section 548. However, unless renewed by appropriate action prior to expiration, the charter will expire 2 years from the date it is filed.

12. Membership Specifications.

- a. The Committee shall be comprised of 15 voting members appointed by the Secretary. In appointing members, the Secretary shall ensure the following: the Secretary will appoint the Chair from the Committee members; at least one member is appointed to represent covered Veterans in each of the areas specified in section 3a of this charter; not fewer than half of the members

appointed are covered Veterans, unless the Secretary determines that an insufficient number of qualified covered Veterans are available; each member appointed resides in an area specified in section 3a of this charter; in appointing members, the Secretary may consult with any Member of Congress who represents an area specified in section 3a of this charter; and in addition to the members appointed pursuant to section 12a, the Committee shall be comprised of such Ex-officio members as the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Interior shall appoint from among employees of the Department of State and the Department of the Interior, respectively.

- b. Terms – The Chair and Committee members shall be appointed for a term of 2 years and may be reappointed to serve an additional 2-year term.
- c. Vacancies – Not later than 180 days after the Secretary (or in the case of Ex-officio member, the Secretary of State or the Secretary of the Interior, as the case may be) receives notice of a vacancy in the Committee, the vacancy shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.
- d. The members of the Committee may be Special Government Employees, regular Government employees or representatives.

13. Subcommittees. With the DFO's approval, the Committee is authorized to establish subcommittees to perform specific projects or assignments as necessary and consistent with its mission. The Committee Chairperson shall notify the Secretary, through the DFO, of establishing any subcommittee, including its function, membership and estimated duration. The objectives of the subcommittees are to make recommendations to the chartered Committee with respect to matters related to the responsibilities of the chartered Committee. Such subcommittees may not work independently of the chartered Committee and must report their recommendations and advice to the full committee for full deliberation and discussion. Subcommittees have no authority to make decisions on behalf of the parent Committee nor can they report directly to VA.

14. Recordkeeping. Records of the Committee shall be handled in accordance with General Records Schedule 6.2 or other approved agency records disposition schedules. Those records shall be available for public inspection and copying, subject to the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552.

15. Filing date.

Approved. _____/s/_____
 Denis McDonough
 Secretary of Veterans Affairs

 6/15/2023
 Date