



MILITARY FAMILY ASSISTANCE BOARD

Meeting Minutes
July 23, 2010

I. Call to Order

The Military Family Assistance Board (MFAB) Meeting was called to order by Secretary Lane Carson, Chairman, at 10:10 a.m. on July 23, 2010, at the Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs (LDVA) Administrative Office.

II. Pledge/Opening Prayer

The pledge of allegiance was led by Brian Jakes and prayer by Precilla Wilkewitz.

III. Roll Call

Amy Burris conducted the roll call of Members. Board members present were: Lane Carson, Gary Hall, Brian Jakes, Mike McNaughton, Joel Robideaux, Evans Spiceland, and Precilla Wilkewitz. A quorum was present.

IV. Introduction of New Board Member and LDVA Staff

Secretary Carson introduced Mike McNaughton as the newest MFAB Member, representing LDVA. He replaced Thomas Enright. Secretary Carson also introduced the LDVA staff in attendance: Richard Blackwell, Deputy Assistant Secretary and Third Party Administrator Point of Contact; Robin Keller, Press Secretary; David LaCerte, Deputy Secretary/Executive Counsel; and Amy Burris, Confidential Assistant.

V. Approval of January 22, 2010, Minutes

The minutes of the above referenced meeting had previously been distributed electronically to the MFAB Members for review. A motion was made by Mr. Jakes, seconded by Ms. Wilkewitz, to approve the minutes as distributed. The motion unanimously passed.

VI. KIA/MIA Benefits Discussion

Secretary Carson briefly commented Act 260 (2007) which provides a lump sum payment to National Guardsmen who die on active duty or become permanently and

totally disabled on/after July 6, 2007. Mr. LaCerte then reviewed the memorandum provided to the Members regarding a proposal by the Chairman to award a maximum lump sum payment of \$2,500, as permitted by R.S. 46:123, to those members of the Louisiana National Guard who would qualify on the basis of disability and those who were killed in action. The current rule states that lump sum payments may not exceed 20 percent of the MFA fund balance per fiscal year. The 2010-2011 fund balance is currently \$455,300, which would allow \$91,060 available for lump sum awards. The proposal identified a total of 17 Guardsmen who would qualify on the basis of disability and 6 Guardsmen who were killed in action.

A lengthy discussion was held and many concerns were expressed, one being the portion of R.S. 46:123(G)(1), which stipulated the service related injury must be a greater than 50 percent residual disability. Three of the 17 Guardsmen who would qualify on the basis of disability were rated at 50 percent. The Board was in agreement not to include those three Guardsmen rated at 50 percent for consideration of the lump sum payment until an amendment is made to the current rule.

Representative Robideaux suggested that the Military Family Assistance law be changed next Legislative session to open up to more potential applicants since only eight people have received money from the program.

A motion was made by Mr. Jakes, seconded by Mr. Spiceland, to approve the debit of \$60,000 from the MFA Fund to pay the maximum lump sum payment of \$2500 to the National Guardsmen or their families as permitted by R.S. 46:123 and identified by the Louisiana National Guard as qualified. The decision of the MFAB shall be final. The motion unanimously passed.

VII. Executive Session – Need Based Claim Appeal

A motion was made by Mr. Hall, seconded by Mr. Jakes, to move from regular business discussion into Executive Session review the application of Case #0310-02 previously denied by the Third Party Administrator. The motion unanimously passed.

A motion was made by Mr. Spiceland, seconded by Ms. Wilkewitz, to adjourn from Executive Session to regular business. The motion unanimously passed.

The following action was taken on Case #0310-02; it was motioned by Mr. Spiceland, seconded by Mr. McNaughton, to issue a need based award in the amount of \$2,599.94 to cover past due utilities, mortgage, auto insurance, and child care expenses. By statute, the decision of the MFAB on this claim is final. The motion unanimously passed.

In other action, a motion was made by Mr. Jakes, seconded by Mr. Spiceland, to approve the recommendation of the Chairman that Lane Carson (Chairman), Mr. McNaughton and David LaCerte serve as the Fund Committee to review and make decisions on all need based applications greater than \$1500 up to \$2500. The motion unanimously passed.

VIII. Update on 2010 Louisiana Legislative Session

Secretary Carson provided handouts and briefed on two bills passed through the 2010 Legislative Session affecting the MFA Fund:

- House Bill No. 1204 (Act 104) provides for the creation of a license plate in which a one-time royalty fee of \$25 for each plate issued will be dedicated to the MFA Fund for veterans programs. Secretary Carson asked for input from the Members on the design of the plate.
- House Bill No. 583 (Act 256) amends R.S. 46:121-123 to allow the MFAB to expend funds (not to exceed ten percent of the beginning Fiscal Year fund balance) on veteran outreach activities.

IX. Other Business

Secretary Carson provided a copy of the 2010 Report of Activities of the Board and Fund to the Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget in accordance with Act 151 (2005).

Secretary Carson asked board members to come up with thoughts and ideas on how to market the MFA Fund to Guardsmen and Reservists.

Mr. Jakes gave an update on the Governor's Military Advisory Board. He discussed an updated economic impact analysis, the Governor's award for recognition and the potential expansion of the board.

Mr. McNaughton voiced concerns about the January 22 MFAB meeting and the approval of the usage of MFA funds to pay travel expenses for the National Guard to bus soldiers home before deployment. Mr. McNaughton stated that more oversight of the money was needed and in the future the board needs to verify that all soldiers who utilize transportation paid for by the MFA qualify for the program and that conditions agreed upon between the MFAB and the National Guard are honored.

Mr. Spiceland suggested that the board consider expanding the MFA to include active duty servicemen and women.

X. Adjournment

There being no further business to be brought before the Military Family Assistance Board, the Chairman adjourned the meeting.

Minutes submitted by: Charmagne Scott, AA6
Amy Cannizaro Burris, CA

17-Nov-10