



**PUBLIC REQUEST TO ADDRESS
THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA**

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

HILDA L. SOLIS
HOLLY J. MITCHELL
LINDSEY P. HORVATH
JANICE HAHN
KATHRYN BARGER

Correspondence Received

The following individuals submitted comments on agenda item:				
Agenda #	Relate To	Position	Name	Comments
7.		Favor	John Oppenheim	
			Shad Meshad	As an advocate for Veterans for over 53 years, I have waited a long time for this kind of change in how Veterans services are accessed and delivered. See my attached/uploaded letter to the Board. Jim Zenner has the ability and drive to lead this change. See my uploaded letter. Shad Meshad, National Veterans Foundation
		Item Total	2	
Grand Total			2	



National Veterans Foundation

Toll-free Crisis Management, Referral & Information
For Veterans ~~and~~ Their Families

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May 17, 2024

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
LA County.gov

RE: Agenda items #7 and #8

Dear Board Members,

As President and Founder of the National Veterans Foundation, I have worked with our Veteran population in LA County and across the country since my return from serving as a psychiatric officer in Vietnam. I have advocated for Veterans and their families for over fifty years. I co-authored the Vet Center program while I was with the VA, using the Vet-to-Vet counseling model I developed on the streets of LA. I'd been hired by the VA to find out why Vets were not using the West LA VA hospital. In 1985 I founded the National Veterans Foundation to offer the nation's first toll-free crisis and information hotline. Our Lifeline for Vets is in its 39th year. The NVF currently trains for the VPAN program of peer-to-peer counseling within LA County's Dept. of Mental Health.

The changes outlined in Agenda item #7 have been needed for a long time. Consolidating resources and streamlining processes will save costs and energy, and will move the needle forward on delivering services to our Vets and their families. Agenda item #8 takes the next step to make social services more accessible to all.

Jim Zenner, whom I have known and worked with for years, is the man who can pull all this together. He's a dedicated, respected, experienced and proven leader in the Veterans Services space in LA County. I have every confidence in his ability to succeed in this new vision of how to create and sustain real change.

Sincerely,

Shad Meshad
President and Founder

When I left home at 7:30 to catch the metro train here, my wife asked me why an 83-year-old veteran wouldn't just stay home join this meeting online. My answer was that I need to be here in person to show how important articles 7 and 8 are and let the supervisors see the passion in my eyes.

I have spent the past ten years as a volunteer working with veterans – from homeless through supportive housing and even death. I have also been a tireless advocate for more and better services for these underserved residents and street people. My passion has been for the older veterans, but not exclusive.

It has not been an easy path and the road ahead is even fraught with more obstacles as our Vietnam veterans enter their 70's and beyond and the younger ones face the same issues as they mature. I won't go into detail regarding these issues, but I have spent enough time in this county dealing with all kinds of agencies and services. I have been discouraged when I realize that most county agencies don't have a veteran specific focus group.

I believe there is a misconception that all veterans get their total care from the VA. While many do, the ones without VA coverage don't and many of those who use the VA medical facilities are not always covered by services.

I was around when VPAN begun and was an early recipient of some special services that Jim Zenner was able to bring us – including himself. I think the concept of a peer network for veterans is a great idea but many of the services VPAN offers are not mental health related – they actually mirror most of the services at MVA. Bringing VPAN into the fold is a big step forward in coordinated services. MVA also has a reach beyond the county into the VA Agency in Washington – an extremely important connection.

In summary, it make so much sense to attack the disparate services and resources now, and help get our veterans the connections we need to get the needed help as quickly and painlessly as possible. This includes suicide prevention.

Please pass these two initiatives today!