

Veterans advisory board is being formed

by Jack R. Shields

for the *Tundra Times*

This article is a first in what I hope will be a long list of articles, which will be focused on what is happening in the Office of Veterans Affairs, some of the veterans issues and commentaries on who, what and where. It also can include some of your specific concerns.

I think a good beginning is to share with you the communication network that we are striving to organize as rapidly as possible. The concept now resembles a line-staff organization.

A Veterans Advisory Board is being formed to provide the primary management group. It will be located in the Anchorage area for ease of access to this office, the VA and service organizations.



The board will consist of up to eight members from the Anchorage-Wasilla-Kenai Peninsula area, as well

as a member from each of the regional councils from throughout the state. This distribution of voting members will provide extensive statewide representation which is the goal for processing communications throughout the geographic areas of the state.

Further, the council's seats could be "open" to allow the council to determine which member should attend a given quarterly meeting. This judgment could be based upon who was traveling to Anchorage, coincidental with the advisory board meeting to optimize transportation costs.

The concept is to have up to eight councils located regionally with subordinate committees in the lesser-populated areas. This way, for example, the veteran in Delta Junction can

discuss his problem or make a recommendation to his local committee.

If they are unable to offer the veteran a solution, the situation can be communicated to the regional council which then can take appropriate actions and/or communicate the problem or recommendation to the Veterans Advisory Board for resolution. The response would then come back via the reverse sequence.

Admittedly, we have some "bugs" to work out, and a lot of energy is required from all concerned to smooth out an organization of this magnitude.

You will be hearing more about this network as time goes by. Whatever the final configuration, its purpose is to provide service to the veteran.

Jack R. Shields is the director of Veterans Affairs for Alaska.