



THOREAU CHAPTER VETERANS ORGANIZATION

PO BOX 136

THOREAU, NEW MEXICO 87323

505-948-6737

Commander Lester Emerson

Vice-Commander Willie Brown

Secretary Rosemary Gibson

MEETING AGENDA – SUNDAY Oct 5, 2025

0800 HOURS

Thoreau Chapter House

Call meeting to order

Pledge of Allegiance

Moment of Silence for all Comrades

Chaplain's corner – message/invocation

Recognition of Guests and/or Officials

Review and adopt agenda

Motion _____ 2nd _____ Yea ___ Nay ___ Abstain ___

Review and adopt Sept 7, 2025 meeting minutes

Motion _____ 2nd _____ Yea ___ Nay ___ Abstain ___

Presentation: FY26 Veteran Trust Fund Budget Allocation – VSO Lori John

Financial Report:

1. Veterans Trust Funds

a. Thoreau Chapter Funds

2. Motion to accept Financial Report

a. Motion _____ 2nd _____ Yea ___ Nay ___ Abstain ___

3. Fundraising

Birthdays: Cynthia Yazzie, Jimmy Yazzie, Rosemary Gibson

Old Business:

1. Thoreau Veterans Service Center Project Update



2. Discussion: Grand Opening of Thoreau Veterans Center?
3. Update: Medicine man
4. Reports: ENVO, TCVO, TLAC Officers, Chapter Officials & Council Delegate
7. Concerns – comments

New Business:

1. Resolution TCVO-FY26-0001: No Confidence in Nygren/Montoya
Motion _____ 2nd _____ Yea ___ Nay ___ Abstain ___

Set next meeting date _____ **2025**

Announcements: Oct 5, Thoreau Chapter Special meeting at 1 pm
Oct 7, Chapter Planning meeting at 4 pm
Oct 8, ENVO Regular meeting at Casemero Lake at 9 am
Oct 12, Chapter Regular meeting at 12 pm
Oct 31, Halloween

Adjournment @ _____
Motion _____ **2nd** _____ **Yea** ___ **Nay** ___ **Abstain** ___



THOREAU CHAPTER VETERANS ORGANIZATION
(Eastern Navajo Agency)
Post Office Box 136
Thoreau, NM 87323
(505) 948-6737

Lester Emerson, Commander

Willie Brown, Vice-Commander

Rosemary Gibson, Secretary

THOREAU CHAPTER VETERANS ORGANIZATION
October 5, 2025 – Thoreau Chapter House

Call Meeting to Order – by Commander Emerson at 8:53am

Pledge of Allegiance – was recited by all; lead by Commander Emerson

Moment of Silence – To all Comrades, families, and extended families who have passed on.

Chaplain's Corner (Message & Invocation) Chaplain Long greeted everyone with his cheery demeanor and welcomed all veterans and others who are here today, and began with stating that he is happy to be here in behalf of Randolph Long, Charley Long, Jr., who has gone home to the Lord, and who were both Marines. He mentioned that he was nominated by the former Commander, the late Jackson Gibson to serve as Chaplain which he gladly accepted. His message was referencing Paul and Timothy who were followers of Jesus who were asked if they are ok and willing to meet God. In that sense, he commented if you're praying for your family, leaders, veterans, children and everybody you know because we sorely need all the prayers and blessings in today's troubled world. He advised everyone to do your best and keep going forward despite all odds. He commented to not be ashamed to pray. He ended with a strong prayer for everyone who are here, especially the veterans. He was thankful for the good weather we are having that allows us to be here at the meeting today. Commander Emerson thanked Chaplain for his words of encouragement and always appreciate his message.

Recognition of Guests and/or Officials: Commander acknowledged all veterans and welcomed them home; the surviving spouses; TCVO Officers, Chapter President, Chaplain Long and everyone in attendance. He recognized Lori John, ENAVO VSO who will make a presentation, and then proceeded to read the agenda.

Review and Adopt Agenda: Motion by Joe Herrera, 2nd by Udall Gibson, Sr., to accept the agenda: **Yea 23; Nay 0; Abstain 3**. Commander asked if there were any questions or changes to the agenda. There were additional agenda items Secretary Gibson requested resolutions to be added. Approval given by Messrs. Herrera and Gibson who motioned and seconded the agenda. Items will be added under **New Business**.

Review and adopt June 1 2025 meeting minutes: Commander asked if we should adopt the September 7, 2025 meeting minutes as is or have it read. Motion by Tommy Yazzie, 2nd by Charley Long to adopt as is: **Yea 23; Nay 0; Abstain 4**. Commander then gave the floor to Lori John for her presentation.

Presentation: Lori John, ENAVO VSO regarding FY 26 Veteran Trust Fund Budget Allocation. Ms. John introduced herself and gave her clanship. She also gave out handouts to everyone in attendance. She explained the handouts and pointed out specific items in her reporting; for instance, regarding the Audit portion, to read pages 36-39 regarding no inconsistency within the 5 agencies. Also, DD 214s were altered/incorrect personal information and various missing documents. Her office is in the process of correcting errors after going through the files, all the files. DD 214s were reordered in some instances and presently working on Standard Operating Procedures. She has a new administration that

came in and it's like starting with ground zero and also working on an Action Plan. Her office had to provide exact list at the end of June 2025. She's been working daily and on weekends. Her office did not purge files but realigned into inactive. The root cause was expired license. She referred to page 4 of the policy (which everyone was given a copy to read) and mentioned valid copy of an ID, in the State of NM license; you have to renew each year after turning 75; substitution could be a Navajo Nation CIB, retired Armed force ID; disable armed force ID. If being a vet, a VA card. 420 out of 1529 came back active and put back in office. Trust Funds will be processed of active veterans. Ms. John used her handouts to thoroughly explain questions on Trust Funds and strongly emphasized to refer to the information provided in the handouts. As she mentioned at the beginning of her presentation, she requested that questions be allowed after her presentation; therefore, the floor was opened to questions and or comments.

Commander stated that TCVO is working with veterans. The current policy hasn't changed yet to the NN Veterans Trust Fund Financial Assistance Program Policies but the understanding is that it is suggested that the word "combat" be inserted. This will cause veterans and surviving spouses cannot apply and only combat related veterans. Also, a suggestion for stipend going to go up to \$1,500 but three agencies came up with no policy change. Ms. John urged to update your file each fiscal year and complete your request for assistance. It takes 2 days processing upon receipt of request. A W-9 is not required but if you received Navajo Nation funds, then you need to fill out the form. Commander requested to turn to page 2 under V, number D and mentioned that it's an agree or disagree situation. Other agencies want to change it to "not less than 180 days". There are a lot of non-combat veterans and more veterans served during peace time. Tommy Yazzie commented that too many restrictions are being placed on us as it is so what more do they want to restrict us with? It certainly doesn't make sense. There was an amount mentioned of \$76,000 not utilized due to lots of restrictions....

Ms. John mentioned that the "end" date last year was end of September and made mention of Form 105. Who knows when end date will be for next year, possibly July to submit application? End date depends on staffing and only 2 financial assistance in one year. Lester Ashley asked about "combat" only. He was advised that it hasn't been inserted in the Trust Fund Policy yet but was suggested. For now, no changes or amendment to the Trust Fund Financial Assistance policy. Gerald Emerson stated there's no policy or no procedure being followed by the people in charge. Commander mentioned 68 taken off our list for TCVO. Out of 62, 31 qualified under Trust Funds. He doesn't know who the 31 names are. Those who are removed can apply under General Fund. Ms. John mentioned that based on a formula, \$1627 will be amount to claim and \$300 for energy and hardship. Commander made reference to Page 5, #J of the NN Trust Fund policy and finds that the balances is always incorrect. In addition, the policy is not followed and that his experience is that individuals making a request, do not contact him but go directly to ENAVO. Therefore, TCVO doesn't know who is making a request and who received assistance.

Commander explained the Plan of Operation for FY26 and pointed out some changes and reminded attendees that those changes were made at our last month's meeting. He gave a copy of the PoO to Ms. John and a discussion followed. As a result, a resolution is required to ensure that TCVO budget allocation will coincide with the Plan of Operation. A copy of the Plan of Operation was attached to the agenda so everyone who attended has a copy for their information and use. Joe Herrera asked if he could request for financial assistance and he was told yes, he can and that relevant information is in the policy to refer to. Also, the TCVO Plan of Operation and a resolution to accompany in support of the PoO. Tommy Yazzie stated how it use to be under our late and former Commander, Jackson Gibson. He'd meet you in the corner and gave assistance explaining you have to do this, and this and this to make a request. I don't like the many restrictions and all the added red tape! On the talk about adding combat should changes be made to the NN TF Policy, I say it is NOT fair! It should not even be mentioned much less be inserted as a change. I do not like it and I'm opposed to it. Udall Gibson, Sr., commented that the recent purge to eliminate our Thoreau count is inaccurate after being told that the Executive Director Bobbi Baldwin just took the unfinished work by Eastern and used the incorrect figures to base the FY26 budget allocation. We know that the Navajo government at Window Rock is dysfunctional and using us veterans only when it's convenient for them. It's really a disgrace of what's going on at our tribal headquarters and council doesn't seem to hold him to do his job. Its been a while since our budget transfer requests went in. Did they get approved so we can know what has been done in order to know our balance even though we used up all our funds. Chapter President mentioned for TCVO to submit resolution regarding insertion of "combat" to keep it out of the revision should there be a revision. Secretary Gibson agreed

with Ms. Benally and said that it'll be good to be ahead of the game to have a resolution, but the Commander was quick to reject the suggestion but to wait in case the word is not put in the policy. Ms. John informed the group that an audit was completed December 2011 and was issued August 20, 2022. At the present, her office is doing some correction on names such as some documents show John Doe and same individual has John Q. Doe. Names have to be consistent or its part of declination to your request. Robin Woods stated that your name is on the DD 214 and that name should be used and not deny the veteran because he put his name on the request form. He proceeded to explain his own personal journey as a veteran and is a color guard as well as having served as a commander. Chaplain Long explained he has been to other veterans' chapter meetings as well as other meetings and noticed that with all the hard work our Commander and his officers are doing, deserves better stipend than they receive now. He stated he's said this before but hasn't happened. He also mentioned the Code talkers who provided such great service. Gerald Emerson commented that we have two Code Talkers in our area. Ms. John commented that it takes just one person to open a can of worms so provide documents of what you want. If there's no documents like a resolution, you can talk and request all you want but documentation is required and serves as your voice. As a VSO, she stated she manages the Navajo Nation Veterans administration at the agency and is an accredited VSO. The office has no accounts maintenance specialist and her staff is very open to learning each other's role. She ended her presentation on a positive note and received a round of applause. Her presentation was informative and educational.

Financial Report: 1. Veterans Trust Funds: Commander stated that as of September 30, 2025, FY25 has zero balance. The new balance for \$50,523 was based on 5 females; 2 surviving spouses, and 24 male veterans. If your name was purged, you're still eligible for General Funds with updated information. a. Thoreau Chapter Funds: We're still using the Council Delegate's first \$5,000 given to Chapter for veterans and we might be getting another \$5,000 but we don't know about the budget allocation. It'll either be \$5,000 or if there's going to be a Continuing Resolution, it'll be \$2,500 but for the full year, it's \$5,000. Balance of \$1,300 in General Funds. Joe Herrera asked about submitting an application for assistance but was informed not until after October 19 or beginning of November. Commander stated with the confusion and all else that's going on in Window Rock, we won't know but our budget will be submitted to Eastern Agency as to how we want to allocate TCVO's funds. Fundraising: We need to fundraise to raise funds for utilities for veterans center. There's \$1400 balance and I keep saying I'll sit down with Coordinator on our balance and expenses for utilities. For now, chapter is using General Funds for paying. Motion by Udall Gibson, Sr., 2nd by Joe Herrera: **Yea 21; Nay 0, 1 Abstain 4.**

At this time, the Commander brought the FY 26 allocation for TCVO and a lengthy discussion took place with good interaction and participation. Commander displayed on the blackboard (white) three options: Option number two was voted on (the budget form decided upon will be attached to documents) and Commander will be submitting it which was decided by the veterans on how FY 26 funds of \$50,523 will be allocated. Motion by Delphine Hobbs, 2nd by Kevin Bennett: **Yea 20; Nay 0, Abstain 12.**

Birthdays: Cynthia Yazzie, Jimmy Yazzie and Rosemary Gibson all had birthdays. Group sang happy birthday. Rosemary baked her own cake and served part of what she sliced and told the group that if they wanted a cake, to come and get it yourself! She announced she was turning 77 on the 17th. Jimmy Yazzie tried to hide!

Old Business: 1. Thoreau Veterans Service Center Project Update: Commander said it's still being worked on. Tommy Yazzie commented he's hopeful for the opening and wants to finally make use of the center although it's not completed as we initially wanted it. Secretary Gibson asked how the flooring was coming along. Commander said it's still a work in progress but feels it'll be opened for November 8 event. She inquired about the weeds; if they have been pulled. Commander said they were but after the rains, its grown back some.

2. Discussion: Grand Opening of Thoreau Veterans Center: Date is set for November 8 to coincide with honoring Veterans Day. Commander said Coordinator volunteered to do the program. He said he sent out e-mails to state legislators, senators and representatives involved with getting us money and for them to RSVP; also invited NNC former CDs, the few CDs who worked on getting us \$3.3million; invited all 31 CVOs for the simple reason that monthly ENAVO meetings are held here and there and now, they can utilize our building to meet. He said he'll also invite the Governor and Lt. Governor.

Secretary Gibson requested the Commander to send her the emails he sent out and stated that she's always asked the Commander to courtesy copy her on what he sends out as these are important to maintain in our TCVO files.

She also inquired about the Color Guards if we will utilize the service of the women color guards who presented colors at our last event. Commander said he asked the women color guards who will be here, all of them to present colors and begin at 9:00am. Secretary Gibson inquired on the furniture, especially the tables and chairs. Commander said he called Butlers and was told they are waiting to hear from CPMD! Chaplain Long commented that we need to watch the veterans building and for someone to check on the building for security purposes. Commander said he's there almost every day.

3. Update: Medicine man: Commander reported that he contacted Mr. John Henry who will conduct the traditional blessing on November 1 at 9am. He required material (absolutely NO red); cornmeal (didn't specify white or yellow); tahdahdeen (yellow corn pollen); documents relating to veterans' center; who'll represent and get blessed for the building; the blessing and cleansing will take about 3 hours and his fee will be \$500. It will be paid from the fundraising and Willie Brown, Vice Commander will be in charge of working with the Coordinator to withdraw funds from the fundraising account maintained by the Chapter. All attendees agreed to utilize the fundraising money. Chaplain Long mentioned that his brother Tom's wife, Anita grows her own corn and gets the corn pollen from her cornfield. He was requested to please ask her if she's got some we can use. He agreed. Udall Gibson, Sr., asked Commander if he put a down payment for the fee to Mr. Henry as is normally done to ensure that services will be conducted and full payment at the time the blessing takes place. Commander said he only asked but will make sure to give him a down payment. In addition, Mr. Gibson told Commander that you will be the representative and be blessed in behalf of all of the veterans; after all, you're our Commander. Commander agreed. Mr. Gibson also asked if anyone has or knows how to make a strong and sturdy bow and arrow since those sacred items are normally placed at the entrance. It was agreed that possibly down the road, we will get a set.

Chaplain Long will conduct his church blessing on November 1, 2025 after the traditional blessing takes place. He stated that the late Commander Jackson Gibson, asked him if he could serve as TCVO's Chaplain. He said he was happy to accept and has been serving as Chaplain. He explained that he told Jackson he will be honored and will do everything he can to be of service to the veterans as he respects veterans and almost became a service member of the Army himself. He will be happy to do the blessing for the veterans building.

4. **Reports:** The Commander attended the ENAVO meeting at Baca Chapter on September 25, 2025. There were some council delegates who showed up; there didn't seem to be a reason for them attending other than possibly just out campaigning for election. Even Bobbi Baldwin showed up; again, nothing but same rhetoric. Our VCO, Lori John was in attendance and gave her presentation on the Veterans Allocation budget. The ENAVO elected new officers. Commander Emerson nominated Commander Gilbert Platero from Tohajille who has experience as being Agency Commander before and is an advocate for our Agency and veterans. Commander Platero is the new President. Hubert Smith is the new Vice Commander. The Secretary position remains vacant as all those who were nominated declined even Commander Emerson.

Secretary Gibson stated that it is so good to see so many attend our meeting today and now that you're here, you see how we conduct our meeting. She explained that you veterans have to participate in our TCVO meetings. She asked everyone present to please donate what you can to replenish our paper goods, eating utensils and supplies to use for our breakfast meeting. Her niece provided paper plates and eating utensils for this morning since we didn't have the plates. The wife of a veteran volunteered to donate and inquired who to give stuff to. She was told anyone of the TCVO officers and also, the chapter accepts on our behalf and are very good about notifying the Commander that they have the donated items. Also, Delsey and her husband, Nelson Morgan are always donating paper goods and other supplies. Veteran Morgan has health issues so they limited their attendance.

Chapter President Benally reported that she has some good news she received on Saturday and is pleased to announce that former state representative, Harry Garcia, said he will be running for state representative, district 69 and will let TCVO members know at the Veterans Day Dinner. Anita has received paperwork from him already. The Chapter is working continuously on projects and has been following up on status contacting Window Rock often. The kitchen is under going

renovation. We're having our planning meeting today around 2 pm so please stay and attend. No Delegate report since he didn't attend. Chapter Secretary Platero came in late and greeted everyone who are in attendance today. She indicated that she likes to speak in the Navajo language because she feels comfortable and besides, Nygren has put out a press release that Navajo is the official language on the reservation. She thanked the veterans for their service. Chaplain Long also mentioned hooray for the Thoreau High School Hawks for winning their game against Tohatchi last Friday by a good score of 51 to zero. Please support your students in their school activities; maybe we're growing some leaders. Take time away from bad news such as whatever happened to the 1000 home initiative for veterans and community, nepotism within our government and dysfunctional tribal government. Take time out to enjoy some sports!

5. **Other:** Early on in the meeting, Commander called Ms. Rose Mae Jim to come forward and she reluctantly stepped to the front. Commander then awarded her a plaque and Rose was obviously surprised to receive an award for her support. Commander read the message on the award presented her. She was really grateful for receiving the award and gave a heartfelt speech and thanked everyone for it. She received a round of applause.

6. **Approve stipend payments for TCVO Officers:** Claims will be submitted when budget for FY26 has been approved. TCVO officers for October 7, 2025 meeting at Thoreau Chapter and Commander for attending ENAVO meeting at Baca Chapter on September 25, 2025.

Set next meeting date: November 2, 2025, 8-1:00.

Announcements: October 7 - Chapter Planning meeting at 4pm
October 8 – ENVO Regular meeting at 9am, Casamero Lake
October 12 – Chapter Regular meeting at Noon
October 13 – INDIGENOUS Peoples Day
October 31 – Halloween

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 1:32pm. Motion by Udall Gibson, Sr., 2nd by Charley Long: Consensus **Yea, 21, Nay 0; Abstain 1.**

Respectfully Submitted,

/s/ Rosemary Gibson

Rosemary Gibson, Secretary