

STATEMENT

The draft language submitted today should not be accepted. Instead, the Commission should insist that HHSA and the County Counsel meet with representatives of the Commission, veterans organizations and the El Dorado County Veterans Alliance, which has managed the Monument since its creation, to go line by line through it and make it something that works for veterans, the public and the County.

The draft is riddled with flaws, contradictory statements, archaic language, omissions, unresponsive obligations, and impossible requirements, that would prevent veterans from being honored.

Here are some examples.

First, at least one veteran insisted that all veterans be treated equally, yet the draft retains the statement, "All eligible veterans will be included proportional to their in-service contributions." In other words, not equally.

Second, the draft describes where civilian contributors, like the Eagle scout who painstakingly created an online directory of over 2,000 memorials, can be recognized outside the Monument grounds. Yet states, "Upon adoption of this ratification, no further integration of civilian recognition is permitted." Why would the County not want to recognize citizens who honor veterans when there is ample remaining space to do so?

Third, to assure that no one can buy honor ... benches and plaques have been funded and placed by the County exclusively for at least a decade. That is why there is a bench honoring Vietnam War veterans and those of this century, but the draft allows any veteran to buy a bench or plaque in his own honor when remaining locations should be reserved for events and persons of greatest significance to the County. The document should specify that only bricks and stones are available for purchase.

Fourth, the draft fails to ask applicants to provide the veteran's service branch, war periods or military accomplishments, which are essential to meaningfully describe a veteran's service on memorials. And it demands the provision of a DD-214, DD-215 or WD form, documents which a veteran's family or friends - in a paperless society - often do not have.

Finally, the document requires families to apply at least two months in advance in order for the memorial to be placed by Memorial Day or Veterans Day. Many would miss that window. They would unknowingly plan to gather family and friends to honor their veterans on these holidays, but they would be denied that by excessively bureaucratic delays. It is entirely unnecessary and burdensome that the VSO review all applications. Only those that risk stolen valor need be vetted. Such as those including claims of Medals of Valor, multiple awards or service in special forces.

So, we ask that the draft be reviewed line by line to remove such faults to truly honor veterans as was intended when the Monument was established nearly 20 years ago.

John Poimiroo, CAPT, USN-Ret
El Dorado Hills
Representing El Dorado County Veterans Alliance

Why the VAC doesn't and shouldn't have authority over the Monument

Public comment 3/13/25 VAC Meeting – Dawn Wolfson

The Veterans Affairs Commission should not have final authority over appeals of placement of honoraria on the El Dorado County Veterans monument.

In 2007 all 5 commissioners were in agreement that the VAC wouldn't have that authority. They decided that in a consensus decision with the Friends of the Monument and the veteran community. The reason for that decision has to do with how the commissioners are appointed. With all respect to the members of this commission, you are all veterans, and I know you all care deeply about veterans issues, but that reason is that you are all political appointees. You serve at the discretion of your Supervisor, not the commanders or the EDC veterans that they represent.

The other problem is that commissioners are not prohibited from serving on the Veterans Alliance board, and any time one of you does, which is pretty common, it is a clear conflict of interest. If you were ever to be given oversight of the Alliance, that cannot be allowed to happen.

In all the years where the Alliance has violated the criteria, has this commission even once spoken against those violations? Have there been any consequences for violations? Show of hands if any of you have voted against anything that the Alliance has proposed.

Misleading our Elected Representatives

Bud Sweet

I'm Bud Sweet. President El dorado County Fleet Reserve Association

The VAC should not have direct purview of monument issues but should assure that contractors are not violating policy or ordinances and should report transgressions to the Board of Supervisors. In EDC they have been averse to doing so.

For example, at a past appeal meeting the Commanders of the County's Federally Chartered Veterans Organizations were led to believe that a Veterans Alliance candidate met the Criteria for honoraria to be mounted on the Honor Wall . We listened to arguments by the Secretary, President and Vice President of the Veterans Alliance and became convinced that their candidate was an exceptional hero. We voted for agreement.

But at a subsequent meeting of the Veterans House Council, we wondered why the applicable military service, Congress and the President had not awarded the Alliance candidate an applicable military cross or medal of honor. Further research revealed that the Alliance had misled us, the EDC community and the Board of Supervisors. The candidate had been evaluated by appropriate federal authorities who had determined that the Alliance candidate did not meet the standards for any of the seven valor awards. Further, the founder of the monument had offered publicly funded honoraria, which was visibly more prestigious than a plaque on the wall and the Veterans Alliance unilaterally rejected the offer with knowledge of the VAC. Two members of the Alliance also served on the VAC, a condition that we consider a gross conflict of interest.

When commanders learned the truth, we wrote personal letters to the Board of Supervisors asking that our votes be reversed but we were ignored. At an elevated appeal meeting with the Board of Supervisors they were also misled by basically the same set of lies and distortions. Consequently, space on the wall specifically reserved, after approval of the Criteria, for the nations top two valor recipients including six awarded to El Dorado County veterans in our 275 years of existence has been desecrated. Our most recent exceptional hero is mounted beneath a plaque representing an airplane crash in El Dorado County.

Why would any knowledgeable survey participants indicate that the VAC should be involved? The answer is obvious. The question assumes VAC organizations are answerable to veterans not politicians. In Placer County Commissioners are appointed by the Commanders.

Schoniger presentation to VAC March 13, 2025

I'd like to address the seemingly anomalous response to Q6 in the survey.

The current criteria and ordinance governing the monument were created to sustain the veterans culture of a privately funded monument on public property. Modeled after the Vietnam Veterans Monument, the organizational structure allowed veterans to influence the culture and design of the monument without unduly compromising the constitution's nondelegation protocol. Commanders of the Federally Certified veterans organizations of El Dorado County were selected arbitrate disputes. By overwhelming consensus, including members of the VAC, they were excluded from direct management participation.

The Ordinance and Criteria ratified by the BOS generally served their purposes until the organizational structure that enforced them eroded. The Treasurer Secretary of the Veterans Alliance was appointed Chairman of the VAC. Another member of the Board of Directors of the Alliance served as a commissioner and the VAC ignored repeated violations of policy and ordinance by the Alliance. The VSO did not certify eligibility of honoraria applicants, and the CAO allowed use of the monument for self-serving speech by at least one supervisor. The Veterans Alliance has also placed honoraria in an area specifically reserved for military cross or medal of honor recipients, discriminated against valor awards by rank, mislead the Board of Supervisors and our community regarding proposed honoraria and expanded monument eligibility to millions. Such conduct has been excused by a claim that governing documents were "hidden from the Alliance and they lack clarity", but members of the current Alliance board were present and participated during their creation. They are available on-line. The VAC did not act to report Alliance violations to the BOS.

So why are the answers to question 6 inconsistent with the other responses. Can EDC veterans be confident that their commissioners represent them rather than the supervisors that appoint them or the Veterans Alliance? How many VAC commissioners and Alliance members responded to the survey? Show of hands please.

Respect For Policy and Law is Essential for Sustaining our freedom

Allen Amaro March 13, 2025

I'm Allen Amaro co-founder of the El Dorado County Veterans Affairs Commission and President of the Disabled Veterans Chapter 63.

The survey question Q6 "Do you support having the Veterans Affairs Commission review appeals and providing a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors when an appeal is requested" would evoke an intuitive yes response by almost any veteran unfamiliar with the history of the VAC. But in El Dorado County it would be a mistake.

The several proposals by the Veterans Alliance to dilute the influence of the Commanders of the Federally Chartered Veterans organizations are simply part of a persistent cover up of violations of current Policy and Ordinance ratified by the 2007 Board of Supervisors. Officers of the Veterans Alliance and members of their board of Directors also served as commissioners allowing the Alliance to ignore policy with impunity. It is time to be held accountable, not rewarded.

The monument requires a balance between veteran influence and civilian authority. Board approved policy and ordinance should be enforced, and unilateral autocratic violations should have consequences. Let today mark the first day of a return to the core values of the veteran brother and sisterhood. Duty, integrity, ethics, honor, courage and loyalty. Please reject any changes that compromise the intended balance between the nondelegation protocol and the ability of EDC veterans to influence the quality and culture of the monument consistent with policy and law approved by the Board of Supervisors in 2007.