

Michaud Congratulates Maine's General Libby on Appointment to new Veterans Rural Health Advisory Committee

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WASHINGTON, DC - Today, Congressman Mike Michaud, Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health, offered his congratulations to Maj. Gen. John W. Libby of Sidney, Maine, who was appointed to serve with 13 other people on the new Veterans Rural Health Advisory Committee. This new committee will advise Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake on health care issues affecting veterans in rural areas.

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"General Libby is an excellent selection for this new committee," said Michaud. "He understands the challenges that veterans face in rural America and will be a staunch advocate for their best interests. Too often it's the case that veterans in Maine have to travel long distances to receive the care that they need. General Libby's presence on the committee will ensure that Maine's veterans are heard loud and clear. I look forward to continuing our work together."

The 13-member group will examine ways to enhance Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care services for veterans in rural areas by evaluating current programs and identifying barriers to health care. The committee, chaired by James F. Ahrens, former head of the Montana Hospital Association, includes affected veterans, rural health experts in academia, state and federal professionals who focus on rural health, state-level veterans affairs officials, and leaders of veterans service organizations.

"I have long called for better access to health care for our nation's rural veterans, and I am pleased that the VA formed the Veterans Rural Health Advisory Committee. I am confident that our nation's veterans will be well served by the advice of these highly qualified individuals. I look forward to working with the Secretary to make sure that this is a committee that is listened to and that their recommendations are acted on."

"This distinguished panel includes strong advocates for the needs of VA patients in rural areas," Secretary Peake said in a statement today. "This is an important step in expanding access to VA's world-class health care system for veterans."

A full list of the members of VA's Veterans Rural Health Advisory Committee is below.

Membership

VA's Veterans Rural Health Advisory Committee

- James F. Ahrens of Cascade, Mont. Former member of Montana governor's task force on health care.
- Dr. Robert Moser of Tribune, Kan. Physician who practices in rural Kansas and Colorado.
- Cynthia Barrigan of Centreville, Va. Veteran, now acting executive director of Virginia Telehealth Network.

• Charles

Abramson of Missoula, Mont. Air Force veteran who served on the medical staff ethics committee of St. Patrick Hospital.

- Maj. Gen. John W. Libby of Sidney, Maine. Adjutant general of the Maine National Guard.
- Hilda Heady of Morgantown, W.Va. Social worker and associate vice president for West Virginia Rural Health Association.

• Dr.

Ronald Franks of Theodore, Ala. Psychiatrist and vice president of the College of Medicine at the University of South Alabama.

• Bruce

Behringer of Johnson City, Tenn. Assistant vice president at East Tennessee State University for Rural and Community Health.

- Rachel Gonzales Hanson of Uvalde, Texas. Member of National Association of Community Health Centers.
- Tom Ricketts, Ph.D., of Chapel Hill, N.C. Director of North Carolina Rural Health Research Program.

• Michael

Dobmeier of South Grand Forks, N.D. National Judge Advocate of the Disabled American Veterans and president of the North Dakota Veterans Home Foundation.

- Terry Schow of Ogden, Utah. Veteran and executive director of the Utah Division of Veterans Affairs.

• James Floyd of Salt Lake City. Native American and director of the Salt Lake City VA Medical Center.

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