

Public Comments
7-13-15

Barry E. Bernier
Post Office Box #1299
Laredo Texas 78042-1299

COPY

July 9, 2015

From: Barry E. Bernier, 1stSergeant, U.S.Marine Corps (Retired)

To: Honorable Tano E.Tijerina, Webb County Judge

Honorable Frank J. Sciaraffa, Webb County Commissioner, Pct. 1

Honorable Rosaura "Wawi" Tijerina, Webb County Commissioner Pct. 2

Honorable John C. Galo, Webb County Commissioner Pct.3

Honorable Jaime A. Canales, Webb County Commissioner Pct. 4

Honorable Leroy Medford, Commissioners Court Administrator

Subj: Statement for the Record: re: Mr. David Garza, Webb County Veterans Service Officer

1. One of the best decisions that have been made by the Webb County Commissioners Court in the last two years was the selection, vetting, and appointment of David Garza to serve as the Department Head of the Webb County Veterans Service Office. This appointment as the VCSO has continually proven to be a very positive influence to expand and improve the numerous services that this office provides to the veterans of our County's communities, and also to their family members. Additionally, Mr. Garza's initiative, guidance, and leadership skills have provided invaluable expertise to plan, develop, and implement a network of support and recognition for Webb County, not only within the State of Texas, but also nationally and internationally.
2. Leadership is the art of being able to influence others in a positive enthusiastic manner to gain their respect, confidence, and desire to accomplish a goal. Mr. Garza's abilities and experience as a successful combat infantry leader was immediately put into action, when one of his first orders of business was to form and organize the Webb County Veterans Commission. The forming of this Commission finally accomplished a task that had previously been considered impossible to ever get done. His efforts brought together a composite of not only all of the Webb County Veterans Organizations, but what is even more significant, many other non-veteran organizations and private individuals participate, as well. A particularly noteworthy tribute to the success of this Commission is \$52,420 dollars that they have raised in the last two years to support events and projects that have directly benefitted the veterans of Webb County.

3. In another area that directly involved financial support to our less fortunate veterans, Mr. Garza immediately, in coordination with the Executive Director of the Veterans Coalition and the County Treasurer, initiated a more efficient system to process and expedite the allocated funds for payments to the veterans. This was important, because in the year prior to Mr. Garza becoming the VCSO, less than one-half of those allocated funds had been dispersed to the needy veterans.
4. In reference to expansion of services being provided by the VCSO, two major projects were planned and initiated by Mr. Garza. The first of these is the Veterans Transportation Program, which was implemented almost two years ago. Successful would be an inadequate statement to what this Transportation Program has meant to improve the quality of life for the hundreds of elderly and physically challenged veterans and their families. Not only is the van service provided at no cost, but the Program Van is also wheelchair accessible. As a note, the Webb County Veteran Transportation Program has been recognized as a "model program" by the Texas Veterans Commission and the Veterans Administration in Houston, TX.
5. The second area where services have been expanded is in the increase in the number of Accredited and Certified personnel that are now working in the VCSO. When Mr. Garza was appointed the VCSO only had one (1) Certified advisor to process a veteran's claim for compensation with the VA. In less than two years, the VCSO now has been upgraded to have one (1) Accredited (Mr. Garza) and three (3) Certified advisors. This latter is significant, because Mr. Garza now has direct access to the VA computer systems to check claim status and input veteran data in support of their claims. This expansion along with the implementation of a VA approved software program now gives the VCSO staff an opportunity to make veterans records digital and eliminate a lot of paperwork files.
6. To date, Mr. Garza's performance as the Webb County Veterans Service Officer has been exemplary, and it brings great credit upon himself and to the people with whom he works. David Garza is temperate and displays the highest of personal and ethical values. His integrity, dependability, and loyalty are impeccable, and they certainly set an example for all of us to follow.

Respectfully submitted,



Barry E. Bernier