

Meet the new Navajo VA director

Written by Staff Reports

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Former Acting Director takes the lead

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. - Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer finalized a contract Nov. 18 for James D. Zwierlein, who has served as the acting director of the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration since July. With the new contract, he will serve as the executive director.

“Mr. Zwierlein’s military background and knowledge will be very beneficial for the Nation as we

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work with federal and state agencies and Navajo veterans organizations to assist and empower our veterans on the Navajo Nation,” Nez said.

Zwierlein has resided in Nahodishgish, N.M. for nearly four years with his wife Marie Zwierlein and their two children. Prior to his appointment, Zwierlein served as an executive staff assistant with the Office of the President and Vice President and was assigned to work on housing issues, including veterans housing.

Zwierlein was honorably discharged in 2011 after approximately 15 years of service in various capacities with the Marine Corps, which included serving as a liaison to members of the U.S. Intelligence Oversight Committee, as an Operations Chief with the 11th Marine Artillery Regiment, in which he managed and coordinated nation-building projects in Afghanistan to rebuild and stabilize local economies. He also served as a project manager at Camp Las Pulgas in Calif., where he managed the construction of several new facilities for U.S. Marine and Navy personnel.

Following his honorable discharge from the Marine Corps, he served as the operations manager for a residential construction company, to create the company’s strategic plans to build homes and generate a highly-skilled workforce using local labor forces.

Among other responsibilities, Nez and Lizer have made Zwierlein responsible for implementing housing manufacturing facilities on the Navajo Nation to construct and deliver homes for Navajo veterans and others.

“Homes are needed in every community across our Nation and with Mr. Zwierlein’s background, and having been in the housing industry, we’re confident he will help build more homes under the Veterans Housing Program and for Navajo families,” Lizer said.

Zwierlein said he is grateful for the opportunity to serve the Nation and that he looks forward to building positive working relationships with the Navajo Nation Veterans Advisory Council and veterans organizations and advocates throughout the Navajo Nation.

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“I am excited that we have finally been able to put this contract in place, so that now we can focus on more important issues that will help our veterans get the service they need. I’m grateful for the opportunity and thankful to President Nez and Vice President Lizer for having confidence in me to fill this position,” Zwierlein stated.