

*Member Organizations:*

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Infantry Association  
*"Triple Nickle"*  
Chicago Chapter

American Legion  
Harold Washington  
Post 1987

Easter Seals

Masonic Service  
Association

Mexican American  
Veterans Association

Montford Point Marine  
Association  
Chicago Chapter

National Women  
Veterans United

Strategic Human  
Services

Veterans for Peace  
Chicago Chapter

Veterans for Unification

Veterans Strike Force

VetNet

## NEWSLETTER

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### **CVO MEETS WITH CONGRESSMAN QUIGLEY'S NEW STAFFER**

BY LARRY NAZIMEK

We have been meeting with the staffers of local congressmen who handle veterans' issues, but we have had the best relationship with that of Congressman Mike Quigley, namely Melanie Thompson. Unfortunately, she has gone on to a new job, and so did her Washington counterpart, Shira Seigel, who had met with us when she was in Chicago.

On Aug. 1, I met with Toma Toma, her replacement. While he is not a veteran and has only been at the job for several weeks, he was very knowledgeable about veteran issues, as his brother is a Marine Corps vet who is suffering from PTSD.

We discussed the core CVO issues and the issues raised at the May 24 press conference.

Vets in the Chicago area face the same problems as vets elsewhere, but when it comes to unemployment, we in Illinois are aware of the "shall hire" provision (where qualified vets must be hired over non-vets) when it comes to State jobs. Why can't the same thing apply to Federal jobs? It is well known that there are 5 and 10 point veteran preferences for Federal (con't p 2)

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## Quigley (con't)

jobs, but this provision only applies to Wage Grade jobs, but not the GS professional positions. For those jobs, a veteran preference is little more than a suggestion. A "shall hire" provision would be of great help to vets seeking Federal employment. For that matter, why can't our government require outside companies, who derive a large portion of their business from government contracts, to have a similar requirement for getting these lucrative contracts?

The issue of waiting times was of interest, due to recent media attention. At the JBVAMC, the Optometry Clinic had been notorious for having patients wait several hours from their appointment times to be seen. That has improved, as the clinic has changed from annual to bi-annual checkups. While they no longer grossly overbook patients, the tradeoff is that patients calling for appointments are currently waiting for 3 months. The Choice Program is not the answer. An obvious solution would be to hire more doctors.

The question of the VA spending large amounts of money on artwork (instead of veterans) arose on account of recent news items. Our local VA hospitals have artwork hanging on walls, so as to create a more pleasant environment, but the large screen electronic displays with various changing scenic landscapes are not cheap!

I mentioned the difficulty that we have been having in getting advance notifications of the Town Hall Meetings and the slow progress in the hiring of a chiropractor at JBVAMC (that had been announced at the beginning of the year). We have written to the Hospital's Acting Director James McLain requesting notifications of future meetings as well as the progress on the hiring of a chiropractor for the hospital, and Mr. Toma will follow up with a phone call to the Director's Office. This paid off, as we received an official notification prior to the fourth quarter Town Hall Meeting from the VA, and we even received an earlier notification from Mr. Toma a week earlier.

I mentioned that the CVO was asking candidates for statements on their positions on veterans' issues, but Mr. Toma clearly stated that this was a matter for (con't p 3)

## PRESS CONFERENCE PRESENTS ISSUES OF CHICAGO'S CONCERNED VETERANS

by Larry Nazimek

On Tuesday, May 24, 2016, a press conference was held on the second floor of City Hall, a place where press conferences are often held. The purpose was to set forth issues of great importance to Chicago Veterans prior to the "campaign season" for the November elections. The timing was also significant, because Memorial Day was the following Monday. Those running for office should realize that veterans vote, and that they should not ignore the needs of those who have sacrificed to make our freedoms and electoral process possible. Similarly, vets need to learn where the candidates stand and to voice their concerns at the ballot box.

The press conference was lead by Marine Corps Vet, former Alderman, and CVO member, Jim Balcer. Many vets from CVO and other organizations were also present. Television cameras from WBBM, WLS, and WGN were present, along with WBBM Radio's Political Reporter Craig Dellimore.

Balcer began the conference with the reason for the press conference and he went on to introduce the various issues. For each issue, a veteran with particular knowledge and involvement came to the podium to elaborate.

Veteran Joe Bazil spoke on the status of the State Home for Veterans in Chicago. Due to the State's budget impasse, construction has been stopped. If/when construction resumes, the overall cost will be more than if construction had continued.

Jim Balcer then addressed the need for a full accounting of every POW/MIA, with those alive (if any) being repatriated, and for the remains of the deceased being brought back to the U.S.

David Rogers, a long-time advocate for homeless vets, and a founding member of CVO, spoke on the continuing disgraceful problem of homelessness among veterans. In spite of promises to end veteran homelessness in Chicago, the end is far from being in sight.

Rob Malnik addressed the issue of the transition from active military to veteran, made particularly difficult by unemployment. In the past, Malnik has worked very hard to organize fairs for veterans that have set an unequalled standard for such events.

Past CVO Chair Bruce Parry spoke on veterans' disability claims. He mentioned that while the heavy backload of benefit applications has been addressed by the past 6 Secretaries of Veterans Affairs, the problem persists and is far worse than the VA admits.

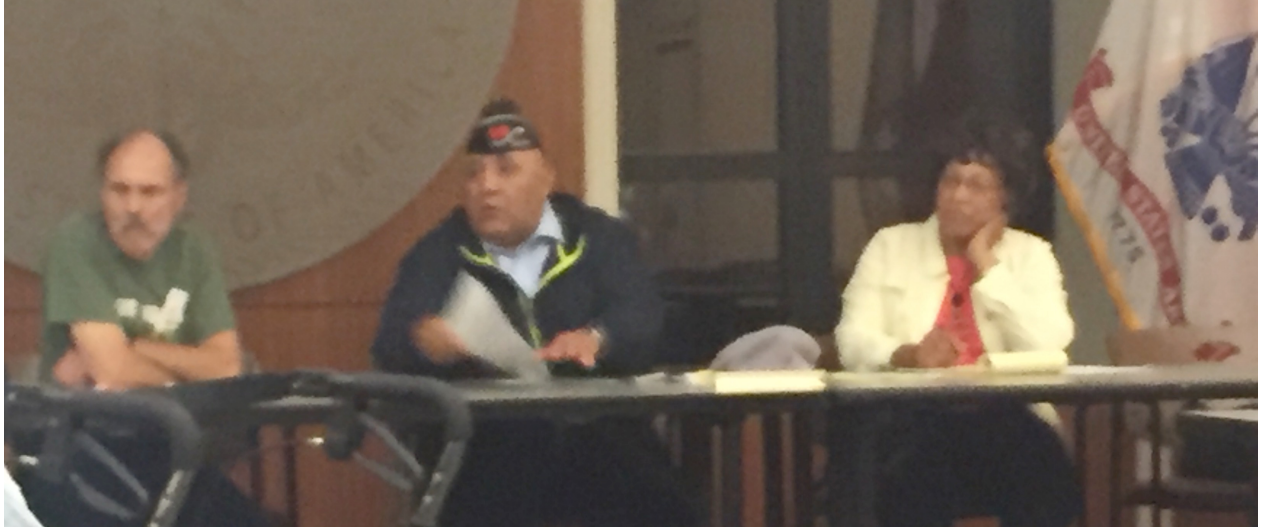
Jeff Gray then spoke on mental health services for vets. Vets suffer from problems seldom experienced by civilians, and this has lead to an estimated 22 veteran suicides per day.

Rochelle Crump, President of National Women Veterans United and a founding member of CVO, spoke on problems faced by female vets. 17% of military members are now women, and that ratio is rapidly increasing. (con't p 4)

## Quigley (con't)

their Campaign Office and not their Constituent Services Office. He emphasized, "We do not conduct any campaign business from this office. The two offices must remain separate. We are so strict on this, that if I see someone from that office walking down the street, I can't even speak to him."

We look forward to a continued excellent working relationship with Congressman Quigley's Office. **CVO**



Larry Nazimek, Abundio Zaragoza and Connie Edwards lead the September CVO Meeting



Jim Balcer, Andrew Brown and Rick Murray at the September CVO Meeting.

## PRESS CONFERENCE (con't)

In many instances, VA health care for female vets is not on a par with that of male vets. Health care, in many areas, must be gender-specific.

Will Schmutz spoke on VA Health Care, beginning with the inefficiencies in the transfer of records from the military to the VA. Schmutz is a former Director of Veterans Affairs for the City of Chicago's Council on Human Relations. Accessibility to all aspects VA health care must be made available to all veterans, which is certainly not the case now.

This press conference lead to WBBM's Craig Dellimore devoting Sunday's "At Issue" program to veterans' issues, with Jim Balcer, Rochelle Crump, and David Rogers as guests. Excerpts from the program were played numerous times on that day as well as Memorial Day.

This press conference is not the end, but rather, a beginning, for our efforts to have our voices heard by both candidates and voters. **CVO**

## THE VA AND CHIROPRACTIC CARE FOR CHICAGO AREA VETS

by Larry E. Nazimek

In past years, the VA has not provided chiropractic care for veterans, but that's not to say that it hasn't been needed. Some years ago, due to the many requests for this type of treatment, the VA formed an "Advisory Committee on Chiropractic Care Implementation," which commissioned a study to see if chiropractic care should be offered.

In this study, each VISN was to hire a chiropractor and place him at one of its hospitals. There were some VISNs, with multiple major population centers, that took this so seriously that they requested, and received, permission to hire two chiropractors. VISN 12, with Chicago and Milwaukee, hired one chiropractor, placing him in the hospital at the Iron Mountain VAMC, in (con't p 5)

# Join CVO!

☐ It's only \$10 a year for individuals.

☐ Organizational memberships are \$50 a year and include one individual membership.

We meet on the third Wednesday of every month at the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center in the 2nd Floor Conference Room.

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Or come to our meeting.  
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CVO is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt  
organization



## VA Chiropractic Care (con't)

Michigan's upper peninsula. Vets at this hospital, like all vets, deserve the very best medical care possible, but when there is a scarce resource, it only makes sense to make that resource available to the largest number of vets.

The final report for this study (dated Dec. 30, 2005), concluded that chiropractic treatment is beneficial and should be offered at all VA medical centers, and the VA's response was in agreement.

Unfortunately, this implementation turned out to simply be a goal, instead of a mandate with a deadline for implementation. Chiropractic care is currently offered at some VA medical centers. In VISN 12, this care has been offered only at the Iron Mtn., Tomah, and Danville VAMCs. (Danville was not part of VISN 12 when its clinic was established.)

In the Chicago area, chiropractic care through the VA has been a situation where there is one policy in writing and another in practice. The VA's policy is spelled out in a blue brochure, "Chiropractic Care for Veterans," that is available in some of the hospital literature racks. The VA also has a "Fact Sheet for Chiropractic Services." Both are available on line.

<http://www.f4cp.com/files/military/va-document.pdf>

<http://www.prosthetics.va.gov/factsheet/Chiro-FactSheet.pdf>

These sheets say that if you need chiropractic care, and it is not available at your VAMC, that you will get a referral, so that you can get the care you need outside of the VA, with the VA paying the bill, more commonly known as "fee basis" care. While this is a good system, in writing, it is not what is done in practice. Chicago area vets in need of chiropractic treatment will not get this referral, so they must pay for it out-of-pocket. The "Choice" program has since overtaken the fee basis program.

Since the VA has been "dragging its feet" in regard to bringing chiropractors to its medical centers, bills have been introduced in Congress to mandate this implementation with deadlines. Every two years, shortly after the new Congress has been sworn in, companion bills are introduced in the House and Senate, but they die in committee and must be reintroduced in the following term, with a different bill number. The bills currently under consideration are S 398 and HR 1170, "Chiropractic Care Available to All Veterans Act." The bills need cosponsors, so CVO wrote to all members of the IL Congressional Delegation, but the only members who have signed on are Sens. Richard Durbin and Mark Kirk, and Cong. Mike Quigley and Danny Davis.

Locally, at the JBVAMC Town Hall Meeting held on Jan. 21, 2016, it was announced that the Hospital would be hiring a Chiropractor and Acupuncturist, with the Chiropractor seeing patients in approx. 2 months. Responses to various inquiries indicated that she had been hired and was undergoing indoctrination to the VA, but at the Hospital's Town Hall Meeting on July 14, we learned that while she had been selected, she had not yet been hired. CVO would not let this matter die, and we are happy to report that the Hospital now has a Chiropractor and is seeing patients with a referral from their General Medicine Doctor. As for the Acupuncturist, it does not appear likely that we will see one in the near future, although there is a sheet with options for free treatment in the Chicago area.

It is ironic that the National University of Health Sciences, one of the top chiropractic schools, is in Lombard, but while it operates a clinic at the Danville VAMC, it does not operate one at the Hines VAMC.

"Stay tuned for further developments."CVO