

VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE REPORT, OCT, 2019

by
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1. As of this writing, there are now 60 cosponsors for H. R. 96, that would require the VA to treat dental care the same as other medical specialties. With one exception (Cong. Reed, NY), all of the cosponsors for H. R. 4556 (predecessor bill in the previous congress) who are still in congress, have signed on to the new bill. We still need more cosponsors, so do whatever you can.
 2. State Rep. Stephanie Kifowit, a Marine vet, introduced HRJ 84 on 9-17-19, a resolution urging the IL Congressional Delegation to cosponsor/support HR 96. This is patterned after the resolution passed by the Cook County Board. I had asked her to do this, at the direction of Acting IDVA Dir. Linda Chapa LaVia. Please contact your State Rep./Senator to request that they cosponsor this. The next meeting of the General Assembly is Oct. 28.
 3. On 9-28-19, Willie Mack, Bruce Parry, and I staffed a table at the grand opening of the Chicago Floor and Decor store. They are “partnering” with us, and are donating \$1,000.
 4. On 10-14-19, Willie Mack, Bruce Parry, Derrick Winding, Sharon Stone-Winding, and I, met with Howard Rosing (Exec. Dir. of the Irwin W. Steans Center for Community-based Service Learning) and Walidah G. Bennett (Dir. of Multi-Faith Veteran Project at the Msgr. John J. Egan Office for Urban Education and Community Partnerships) at DePaul’s downtown campus to discuss getting interns to work on CVO projects. Essentially, we told them what we needed, and they told us about what types of services they can provide. More meetings will follow. It’s a matter of “...a journey of 1,000 miles begins with one step.”
 5. Because JBVAMC is operating with an Acting Dir., the Director’s Corner, whereby the Dir. meets with veterans on Thursdays, is temporarily suspended. Vets can still submit comments/questions/etc. in the black boxes.
 6. On 10-15-19, Bruce Parry and I attended the JBVAMC Town Haul Meeting, that was also carried on Facebook for those who could not attend in person. The only congressional rep. was from Sen. Duckworth’s Office. I thanked the Sen., on behalf of CVO, for introducing S. 1573, saying that we are still opposed to all copays.
- VARO Dir. Hughes Turner stated that the law for the Blue Water Navy (i. e., those who served on ships within 12 NM of the coast of Vietnam and the Korean DMZ, during specified dates, are presumed to be suffering from Agent Orange) will take effect 1-1-20, although vets can submit claims ahead of time.

Acting Dir. Lynnette Taylor, who started her VA career as a GS-3 nurse here, announced that on 10-4-19, a vet was found dead in his car, on the 7th floor of the parking lot, of an apparent self-inflicted wound. She went on to say that both JBVAMC and Hines were looking for new directors.

Bruce Parry stated that the Eyeglass Clinic at JBVAMC is taking advantage of their monopoly in serving vets here, by charging high prices. He was able to get specific glasses for much less on the outside than they wanted to charge. I added that when this Clinic opened, that it was a big improvement over the previous method (where glasses were made at an outside facility, with no such Clinic), and that the employees were very professional in the way they fitted glasses and served vets, but now, they were like salesmen, trying to get vets to buy their glasses.

Other vets, as usual, raised a lot of personal issues that should really be handled individually.