

VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE REPORT, JUNE, 2020

by

Larry E. Nazimek

1. At our Feb. meeting, member organizations that were present volunteered to work on the congressional delegations of the states they selected, but so far, we have not had any new cosponsors from these states or any others (Harold Washington American Legion: MN, NWVU: IN, Veterans for Peace: HI, Blue Star Platoon: WI, Vet Tech US: MI). We can still contact congressional staffers, even though there is the COVID-19 pandemic. At the meeting, I will ask the reps of the various organizations about how things have been going for them on getting more co-sponsors.

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. There have been no new cosponsors, but at the Illinois General Assembly, those who wish to co-sponsor a bill must go to some "Journal Room," which is now closed. That does not, however, preclude you from asking your state rep/senator to co-sponsor once they are able to do so.

3. Regarding H. R. 3932/S. 1573, that would eliminate copays for preventive treatment, there has been no action.

4. Underwood/Duckworth just introduced H. R. 6845/S. 3724, a bill to prohibit the Secretary of Veterans Affairs from charging veterans copayments for preventive services relating to COVID-19. They are similar to H. R. 3932/S 1573, in that they are concerned with eliminating VA copays for preventive care, but they are all in need of cosponsors, so please get co-sponsors.

5. I was on the America's Heroes Group radio program, Saturday, May 30, to discuss H. R. 3932/S. 1573.

6. State Rep. Joyce Mason, of Gurnee, introduced H. R. 4903, a Veterans Bill of Rights, that provides for several things (too long to mention) for vets. She also introduced H. B. 4944 that would consider vets with less than honorable administrative discharges the same as those with Honorable Discharges when it comes to State programs.

She is very interested in helping vets, and when the restrictions are lifted, I will meet with her to discuss them. If you have any ideas for legislation (besides getting vets dental care through the dental schools) that you would like me to bring up, let me know.

7. Regarding the VA's dental pilot program that was introduced in the Federal Register on Dec. 13, we are still waiting for an update. We called their voice mail once again and emailed them, but have not heard back.

8. Regarding Aspen Dental's annual Day of Service, no decision has been made yet as to whether it will take place this year, although they doubt it. As for their Mouth Mobile, everything is on hold due to the pandemic. I will keep trying.

9. We wrote to Dr. Chad Gehani, the President of the American Dental Assn., with the hope of getting their support for H. R. 96, but he replied, saying that they will not get involved, although he passed our request to another department. They agreed us, but they still won't do anything about it.

10. The JBVAMC Stakeholders teleconference meeting scheduled for May 13 was rescheduled for May 21. I represented CVO. I will spam out the meeting minutes once I get them.

11. The JBVAMC Town Haul meeting is scheduled for June 29, but that doesn't mean that it will actually take place. Wait and see.

12. As you have probably heard on the news, the inbound Eisenhower Expwy. (I-290) ramp to the outbound Kennedy Expwy. (I-90/94) is closed for construction, and is scheduled to remain closed until some time in Nov. The detour directs traffic to the outbound Dan Ryan Expwy. (I-90-94) to Taylor St., at which drivers are to exit and re-enter the Dan Ryan heading north. According to newscasts, drivers are finding this complicated. A better alternative that I have taken for many years, when I see that the inbound Eisenhower is very congested, is to proceed NE on Ogden Ave. until shortly before Chicago Ave., where there is an on-ramp to enter the outbound Kennedy.