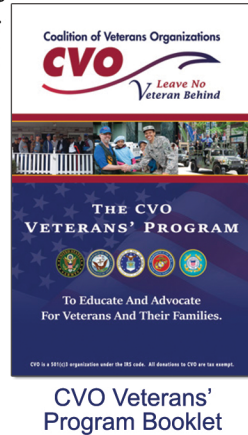


Veterans Information

The Veterans Affairs Committee of CVO has produced important literature laying out the CVO Veterans Program and pointing the way for veterans, their families and the public to take action on the part of veterans. The CVO brochure lays out a brief history of CVO, its core issues, its membership, and calls the reader to action. The pamphlet, *The CVO Veterans' Program*, lays out a detailed plan of action for veterans, their families and the public. Both pieces of literature have been disseminated widely.

CVO is online. Under the direction of its longtime webmaster, Joe Kerwer, CVO has provided information for veterans that is otherwise hard to find. Current events, legislation and veteran resources are highlighted. The Jobs Tab is an important asset to those veterans looking for work. Besides the CVO website, CVO has a presence on Facebook, Twitter and other social media. CVO emails also keep the membership informed.



Social Activities

CVO has also participated annually in the Chicago Memorial Day Parade. Generally, CVO has decorated vehicles with the CVO logo and marched with the CVO banner. Many member organizations have marched as part of the CVO contingent. Other member organizations have marched on their own and carried signs that stated "Proud to Belong to CVO."

CVO is a fun organization to belong to. It has held numerous fundraiser parties over the years at various venues across Chicago. For the first several years, we held dinners prepared by chef and CVO member Charles "Smudge" Coleman. Recently, we have been holding the parties as luncheons and having the live entertainment of The Three of Us, led by long-time CVO supporter and member Thaddies Holloway.

Member organizations also have their fundraisers: parties, galas, luncheons and dinners. CVO has been a supporter of its member organizations from the beginning.



CVO at the Memorial Day Parade. David Rogers and Howard Noey are sporting the traditional CVO look. Tallibdin Shabazz is wearing the new garrison cap. Also shown is member Christopher LaFayette.

Attention to Organizational Details

CVO developed its logo early on and that has helped with organizational identification throughout the Chicagoland area. CVO hats and shirts have been an important part of the CVO uniform. For years, CVO wore the bright blue of its logo and both hats and shirts sported that color. In 2011 the membership voted to go to black garrison caps, which some members now sport in addition to the traditional blue.

In 2012, CVO held a retreat for the Executive Committee and interested members. It was held at The Chateau in Bloomington, Illinois in order to avoid distraction. Led by a professional, the retreat set the direction of CVO for years in the future and rededicated the attendees to CVO and its veterans program.

CVO has met monthly since its inception. It currently meets at 7PM on the third Wednesday of the month. Between meetings, the Executive Committee of about nine members is responsible for running the organization. Dr. Bruce Parry chaired the organization through May 2015, when the Chair started rotating on an annual basis. Meetings were originally held at Montford Point, but later moved to different locations in the city. Currently, CVO meets at Jesse Brown VA Medical Center. CVO received its 501(c)3, tax-exempt status in 2008.

CVO has become an important part of the veterans movement in the greater Chicagoland area. Its reach has extended to other states and the national capitol. Its members have been the key to the success it has experienced and to carrying out its program of education and advocacy. CVO will continue to support both its member organizations and veterans from every walk of life in their quest for better lives. Veterans and their families remain at the center of the CVO focus.

Coalition of Veterans Organizations



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Our
History

History of Coalition of Veterans Organizations

In November 2006, veterans Rochelle Crump and David Rogers called together a meeting of the leaders of veterans organizations from around the greater Chicagoland area. The meeting was held at the Montford Point Marine Association on Chicago's south side. Many veteran leaders attended and the decision was made to continue meeting. In early 2007, the meeting was formalized as the Coalition of Veterans Organizations (CVO) with Dr. Bruce Parry as its Chair.

The organization was marked by its diversity: racially, by gender, religion, and types of veterans' organizations. CVO has both organizational and individual members. Key organizational members have included the National Women Veterans United (NWWU), Veterans Strike Force (VSF), the Montford Point Marine Association (MPMA), Veterans for Unification (VU), Vet Net, Veterans for Peace, and both the Mexican American Veterans Association and the Muslim American Veterans Association (confusingly, both are MAVA). Several American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) posts have also joined.

Early on, CVO set up strategic or core issues. It was and is an advocacy organization, set up to do what no other single member organization could do in terms of education and advocacy. While the core issues have been slightly modified over the years, they remain the essential vision of what veterans deserve and need to fight for.

Programmatic Activities

CVO has been active over the years. The first major action was to take over 100 veterans and three buses to Washington, D.C. The city of Country Club Hills supported this effort. In Washington, the veterans met with and briefed our Congressional representatives and senators. The meetings lasted all day and were deemed quite successful. Besides numerous individual Congressmen, we met with the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. A smaller group returned to Washington in 2008, carrying the message of the need for universal health care without copayments for all veterans.



CVO press conference at the kick-off of the Washington, DC trip.

CVO has held a series of Town Hall meetings over the years, most at Montford Point. They have included numerous Congressmen, Senators, State Representatives and Senators, County Commissioners, Aldermen and their staff members. Additionally we have met with candidates at every level during races. In each case, we presented the CVO Veterans Program, solicited comments and questions of concern from veterans from across Chicagoland, and heard the programs the special guests laid out for the veterans.

CVO has been vocal in its support of veterans affairs. This has been expressed clearly at the Cook County Board of Commissioners in its support for the Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County (VACCC).

The VACCC had seen its budget slashed over the years, cutting off funding to the neediest veterans. CVO testified and worked with the Cook County Commissioners to increase the VACCC budget.

National and state legislation has also been part of the CVO activities. This has been the focus of the CVO Veterans Affairs Committee, chaired for years by Dr. Connie Edwards and currently chaired by Larry Nazimek. Support for Chiropractic care, veterans license plates, increased veterans affairs budgets, access to better health care and rectifying the veterans benefits process have all been part of the CVO program.

Of particular note is the effort of CVO on the VA's Crisis Hot Line. The women veterans of NWVU faced a situation where veterans were calling the hot line and being placed on hold or not getting answered at all. They brought the issue to CVO. CVO wrote letters to the Secretary of the VA, the VA Office of the Inspector General (VAOIG), the Illinois Congressional Delegation and others. This resulted in a two-year long investigation into the Crisis Hot Line. The final report of the VAOIG made it clear that the actions of CVO were central to its investigation. It made recommendations for important improvements in the Crisis Hot Line.

Additional activities of CVO have included important service work. We helped organize the rehabilitation of a house for veterans with one of our member organizations. Dozens of veterans turned out to support this effort.

We have been an annual participant in the Englewood High School Back to School program. CVO's Veterans Against Violence Committee, chaired by Darryl Howard and Willie Mack, has connected with local efforts to end violence on our community streets. Veterans know violence and know that it has no place in our communities.

The CVO Homelessness Committee, chaired by David Rogers, has been instrumental in supporting local and national efforts to end veteran homelessness. It has held a series of seminars on ending homelessness for service providers and veterans. In conjunction with others, it has opened up facilities at multiple sites in the city to serve the homeless population. It has been at the forefront of education and activity on this important issue. There is no greater disgrace than the fact that this country has veterans who have served their country and who are now homeless.



CVO at the U.S. Senate Veterans Affairs Committee

November 2006
Founding Meeting held at Montford Point Marine Association

February 2007
Adopted the name Coalition of Veterans Organizations

August 2008
Sponsored and Participated in the Veterans Awareness March starting at Daley Plaza in Chicago

April 2009
Town Hall with Sen. Roland Burris at the Montford Point Marine Association

January 2011
Mayoral Candidate Forum at Montford Point

October 2013
Press conference and testimony before the Cook County

April 2014
Called attention of federal authorities to the crisis in the Veterans Crisis Line; the final federal response to our inquiry was published in Feb 2016

May 2016
Held a Press Conference on Veterans Issues with the Concerned Veterans

Coalition of Veterans Organizations History Timeline

2006

2007

March 2007
Took 100 Veterans to Washington, DC and met with US Senators and Representatives

2008

November 2008
Sponsored and carried out a referendum call for Full Funding of VA Healthcare on the ballots of 23 counties in Illinois

2009

2010

September 2010
Veterans Roll Call Meeting at Malcolm X College in Chicago

2011

2012

June 2012
CVO Weekend Retreat held in Bloomington, IL-Set strategic direction for CVO

2013

2014

September 2014
Town Hall meeting for elected officials at Montford Point

2015

November 2015
Continued to bring attention to the veterans crisis line through other veteran organizations.

2016

