

Coalition of Veterans Organizations

Minutes April 18, 2018

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chairman Willie Mack at 7 PM. Member of the Board and some of the officers are present prior to call to order for meet and greet or to discuss personal matters with any Veterans that wish. Pizza is also available at that time as well as during the meeting.

Pledge and Moment of Silence: The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the US of America is always recited followed by A Moment of Silence for comrades in Harms' way prior to the start of meetings.

April Minutes. The printed minutes were circulated. Travis moved and Howard seconded the motion to approve the minutes with minor typographical corrections.

Committee Reports

Veterans Affairs: Larry Naimek reported that the Director of the JBVAMC has a suggestion box for veterans' concerns.

The means testing for VA health services continues.

Problems with private hospitals communication with the VA leaves some individual veterans who are entitle to seek certain care from the private hospitals at the VA expense leaves some veterans with delinquency notices for not paying bills incurred.

Bruce Parry reported that the Cook County Veterans Assistance Commission honored CVO member, Stanley Porter at the VAC fundraiser in March 2018.

Member David Rogers and Commander Frank Thompson were in the JBVAMC emergency room for services during this meeting.

Civilian Member, Francine O'Connor recently retired from Hines VAMC.

Bruce Parry, Larry Nazimek, and willie Mack met with Senator Durbin's office staff to educate them on veterans; concerns about the likelihood of privatizing VA health care and the Right to Heal Movement against those plans. Bruce Parry went to Springfield with the Right to Heal participants. About 50 other veterans also attended.

Bruce Parry also brief those in attendance on the Poor People's Campaign that coincides with the 50th Anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King who started the movement during his civil rights movements. The "Campaign is for a national call for a Moral revival against poverty, racism, and militarization of society at the expense of veterans".

Chris LaFayette initiated a discussion about Veterans as "a protected class". Enough cases of violence against veterans have been reported for some action. He also mentioned that "some people are making money by putting their feet on the necks of veterans". Chairman Mack asked if CVO members and other veterans who have data on the protective class violations, employment, medical, human rights violations against veterans could submit a written synopsis of those so that CVO can evaluated the merits of how those concerns fit into the CVO purpose. CVO can allocate meeting time and action as appropriate for the good of veterans.

Old Business: There was none to be conducted at this meeting.

New Business:

Election of Board Members for 2 year terms. Anthony Travis moved and Francine O'Connor second that the persons on the Ballot be elected by acclamation. Board Members, Connie Edwards, Bruce Parry, and David Rogers who were on the ballot at the expiration of their 2-year term were confirmed by acclamations of the voting members present to serve another 2- year term as was Frank Thompson, who had sent his consent to serve via past chair Bruce Parry. As noted earlier, Frank Thompson was not present at this meeting to his personal care in the ER during this meeting. Persons on the ballot for the Board are required to be present during the election meeting unless approval is granted to accept a written consent for election.

Protection of Veterans 70 years and older. Legislation is in Springfield to waive property taxes for those veterans.

War Veteran Deported: Carlos Luna reported that Miguel Perez, a disabled veteran with PTSD as a result of serving during the Iraq war, was deported to Mexico last month despite of efforts by other veterans and leaders with whom he served during the war. He was brought to the US as an elementary school age child and spent his life in the US until he volunteered for the military and completed combat duty. Due to a crime related to his self- management of his PTSD, he was imprisoned for 18 months. Upon his completion of his sentence he was detained by ICE rather than released to freedom. Since he had less than a honorable discharge from the military he was declare ineligible for VA healthcare and other veterans' benefits. He was essentially abandoned, homeless by the US in Mexico, a place that he does not know, and not with support of the Mexican government. According to Luna there are other former US veterans who are in Mexico. They have somewhat located each other in Mexico and serve as a pseudo emotional support group for each other. A 501c3 group, Green Card Veterans, a member of the League of United American Citizens, is in the process of raising some funds to send to Perez for a couple of months housing and basic essentials. Green Card Veterans is a member of CVO. CVO gave the standard \$100 donation to be deposit to the Green Card veterans. That amount is the standard amount permitted to member organizations by the CVO by-laws when the CVO treasury is greater than \$2000.

Presentations:

AFGE (American Federation of Government Employees). Donald Evans gave a brief presentation on what the Right to Heal Campaign means to employees in the VA setting. Bills are being introduced to shut down the VA Health care systems through privatization of VA healthcare services while a picture is shown of poor VA health care services. Some of the less than favorable care is because many official positions within the VA are intentionally not filled to drive down the presumed quality of care. If those positions were filled veterans will continue to receive their care where it was promised to them as a part of their benefits package when they consented to pay it forward by serving in the military to fight for the freedom of those who are now taking that promise away from the veteran when the veteran needs it the most. Where services are already farmed out to the private sector, veterans report that they do not get the same veterans' unique services they need. Plus, the psychological healing benefits of healing among others who understand their unique needs. The little recognized benefits of patient to patient

familiarization of the sources of each other's dis—ease adds much to the healing process when veterans are among understanding comrades, a promise unfairly denied. Plan to close 1100 VA medical facilities has long been in discussion. HR 4242 makes the Choice program permanent and also takes away a promised benefit. People who understand and resent those plans should text 225568 to AFGE. AFGE will have the individual's Congressman and Senators contact information. Congress and Senate are known to quickly pass bills, even overnight when the general public has little knowledge of bills and riders on bills.' This is considered by many to be a fight against humanity." The "sneaky ways the privatization plans go often cause veterans to split among themselves or veterans against VA staff.

Callahan Funeral Directors, 7030 S Halsted, Chicago, gave a presentation on the benefits of Prepaying for funeral expenses. Many veterans are aware of the burial benefit but do not know how to properly use it. Even when one has a donated burial spot the opening and closing of the grave must be paid at the time of burial by whoever is responsible at that time. The cost of funerals and burials go up overtime. Callahan presented an insurance package that they call the Jesse Brown Package for \$7,500. It can be used at other than Callahan and in other parts of the country but burial must be in a VA cemetery. A DD214 is mandatory and the funeral home can assist veterans to obtain their DD214 if necessary and will keep it on file since it will be someone other than the deceased veteran who will need access to the document. Veterans are encouraged to provide potential surviving responsible persons with a copy and to inform those persons about their burial benefits, especially that they do not have to pay for the burial plot and opening and closing at a veterans cemetery. Further they need to know that the burial benefit does not cover caskets and funeral home costs.

Medicare Benefits. Alethia Kahn of the Center Insurance and Financial Services, 1284 W. Northwest Hwy, Palatine, IL, C 773-503-9498 or 847-907-9211, presented how Medicare eligible persons can have a package developed for them to include dental, medications, and visual for which the insured will not have to pay any additional for that coverage.

Announcements

Veterans for Unification meeting June 2 from 10 to 1130 at the Oak Park Library. (Francine O'Connor)

Darling, Inc Fundraiser June 9 from 7-11 PM, obtain more detail from Obie on location, etc. This organization provide housing for homeless veterans in Ford Heights, IL.

Journey for Justice Conference May 18-20 at Walter H. Doyette High School, Chicago.

WCIP Radio AM 820 Veterans Program: Thank You for Your Service, Time and day of week not recorded.

Poor People's Campaign Going to Springfield, Illinois on Memorial Day, May28, 2018. See Bruce Parry for transportation details.

Adjourned: 9:10 PM

Next Meeting: June 20, 2018 at Jesse Brown VAMC, 2nd Floor Damen Building.

Respectfully submitted,

Col (Ret) Constance Edwards, PHD, /Vietnam Veteran, Army Nurse Corps

