

VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE REPORT, JUNE, 2019

by

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1. As of this writing, there are now 54 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.

We have discovered that Dr. Patricia E. Arola, the VA's Asst. Under Secretary for Health for Dentistry, is the VA official tasked with analyzing legislative initiatives impacting dentistry. We have just made contact with her and are sharing our position with her. We have nothing to report yet.

2. On April 25, I testified before the Cook County Board in support of a resolution, similar to the one passed by the Chicago City Council, to urge the Illinois Congressional Delegation to support H. R. 96. The Board will vote on it at their next meeting. It should have happened sooner, but it somehow was routed to the wrong committee. There was a story on this in Commissioner Luis Arroyo's newsletter, so if nothing else, we are increasing awareness of this issue.

3. On June 10, I attended the Town Haul Meeting at the JBVAMC. No congressional staffers were in attendance. The meeting was being streamed on Facebook, and there were two questions submitted by those on FB. If you go to the JBVAMC FB page, you can watch the entire meeting.

Lela Vance-Glover, the PA employee at the JBVAMC, has retired. Valerie Creedon, a friend of Francine O'Connor, is the acting PA, and she was the one working the camera for FB.

Dir. Marc Magill began by going over items brought up at the previous meeting. Among those were, in response to my question, that we will be getting Wi Fi, initially in the form of hot spots, but will still take more time. They are also working, as per my suggestion, to have the City set up their mobile processing equipment to process the City Key ID Card, so that vets will be able to get these cards (free for vets), without having to wait in long lines.

In response to one of my "Director's Corner" submissions, water fountains are being repaired.

The Mission Act was discussed. They say that it is not the same thing as privatization of the VA. It will not have a very great impact here, because veterans can get their healthcare here. It will primarily help those in rural areas.

Questions were raised concerning cannabis. Because it is still illegal by Federal Law, the VA is not having anything to do with it. If someone feels that he needs it, he should discuss it with his primary care doctor.

We have practitioners of acupuncture and various non-traditional practices. The VA will not, however, fill prescriptions for things like Chinese herbal medicines, as they are not approved by the FDA and are really food supplements and not drugs.

The National Kidney Foundation of IL has a “Kidneymobile” truck that travels to various places, where they conduct mini-health fairs and have very extensive blood tests. They have done this in the past at JBVAMC, so I suggested that we get them again. Volunteer Services Chief Pat Gleason will take care of it.

4. The State still hasn’t published the new Illinois Handbook of Government or the Illinois Blue Book, but I keep checking.