

Coalition of Veterans Organizations

CVO



*Leave No
Veteran Behind*

VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE REPORT

PREPARED BY
LARRY E. NAZIMEK

www.coalitionofvets.org

**JANUARY
2022**

VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE REPORT, JANUARY, 2022

by

Larry E. Nazimek

1. H. R. 914 has 48 co-sponsors, of which 3 are Republicans, including Jefferson Van Drew and Paul Gosar, who were dentists in their prior lives. There are 3 more Republican dentists in congress, so Mark Weiman is contacting them. 11 co-sponsors are from IL, while CA, with the second highest, has 5. The IL congressmen we still need are Foster, Schneider, and all 5 Republicans.

Our efforts to get interns or volunteers to work on getting co-sponsors have been unsuccessful.

If anyone has any ideas, please speak up.

2. Sen. Bernie Sanders introduced S. 3017, Veterans Dental Care Eligibility Expansion and Enhancement Act, on 10-20-21. It only has 5 co-sponsors, the original ones. Please work on this bill, too. Our responses from our two senators has been a disappointment.

Duckworth's first response mentioned her various initiatives for veterans, without mentioning dental care. When we called her on that, second response was to spell out what the bill provided, but instead of co-sponsoring, as requested, she only said that she would wait until it was out of committee. Without more co-sponsors, however, it may never get out of committee.

Durbin's response was that we didn't need VA dental care, because we had VADIP, a program that is not cheap, has its flaws, and relatively few veterans participate in it.

3. Sephanie Kalota, of Veterans Legislative Voice, was a guest on America's Heroes Group, Jan. 8, talking about S. 3017. She asked me plenty of questions about the bill prior to the program, and she did a great job on the air. She will work on promoting the bills through social media, an area where we are lacking.

4. We did a lot better getting co-sponsors on H. R. 96 (dental bill in 116th Congress) then H. R. 914, which is surprising, because we were counting on those who co-sponsored the previous bill to do the same here. If every member of every one of our organizations, plus every one of our individual members, were to take even 5 congressmen/senators to work on, we would be doing a lot better. If any member or organization is willing to work on this, please contact me, so that we can coordinate who you will work on. I can provide the type of letters that I use, so you can either use them or write your own. It's a matter of calling their DC office, asking for the email address of the staffer who handles veterans issues, emailing that person, and, if not response, following up in 2 weeks. Simply writing a single letter is not enough, based on our experience.

5. With 435 congressmen, it is obvious that we can't take on the entire Congress. The national organizations must do their part. The American Legion was listed on Cong. Julia Brownley's letter (to her fellow congressmen about H. R. 914) and a similar letter from Sen. Bernie Sanders (regarding S. 3017) as a group supporting the bills, but dental care is not on the AL's list of legislative priorities for the 117th Congress: <https://www.legion.org/legislative/agenda>. You can download their booklet on this topic: <https://www.legion.org/sites/legion.org/files/legion/publications/11LEG0221%20Commander>

[%20Testimony.pdf](#) . You may wish to contact their Legislative Affairs Division to ask them why: leg@legion.org (202) 263-5752.

6. JBVAMC had a Town Haul meeting via telephone on Nov. 18. Although I pressed *3 (to indicate that I wanted to ask a question) as soon as we were told that we could do this, during the course of the 90 minute meeting, I was not called, while 21 others were called upon, plus others who submitted their questions on FB. Most of the questions were about COVID-19, that anyone who watches the news about COVID-19 would know. Connie Edwards, however, was called upon, and she asked about the dental pilot program. Dr. Sarah Unterman, JBVAMC Chief of Staff, stated that she knew nothing about it, but would look into it. I emailed her with the Federal Register info about the program, and she replied that they have a list of low-cost dentists, and that was what the Federal Register program was about. I then emailed her info on VETSmiles.

7. It has been 22 months since the bill was signed that authorized the pilot program for limited dental care. This program was supposed to take place in 4 VISNs, including VISN-12. So far, only New York has anything in this regard. Like everything else, COVID-19 is blamed. I was told that the program, which they call “Veteran Smiles,” will extend to 9 more VISNs, and we should get it by the end of FY 2021.

8. Aspen Dental’s “MouthMobile,” a dental clinic on wheels, is not presently operating.

9. S. 1779/H. R. 3452: Veterans Preventive Health Coverage Fairness Act. The Senate bill was introduced by Duckworth and co-sponsored by Durbin and 4 others. The House version was introduced by Underwood and has 24 co-sponsors, including, from IL, Garcia and Newman. This bill eliminates veterans' co-payments for medication, hospital care, and medical services related to preventive health services provided by the VA.

10. H. R. 617, No Coronavirus Co-pays for Veterans Act, was introduced by Underwood, with only 3 co-sponsors, none from IL. S. 399, introduced by Duckworth, with only 1 co-sponsor, is the senate version of the same bill. Civilian insurance policies do not charge for these treatments, so it is not fair that Veterans should be charged for it.

11. H. R. 845, VA Billing Accountability Act, protects vets from VA billing errors or charges posted over 180 days from the treatment. There are 20 co-sponsors, all Republican, with Rodney Davis as the only one from IL.

12. H. R. 5721, VA Infrastructure Powers Exceptional Research Act of 2021, has 3 co-sponsors, with Mike Bost the only one from IL.

13. Bernie Sanders introduced S. 3020, Veterans State Eligibility Standardization Act, which eliminates the differences in copay thresholds from county to county. It has no co-sponsors.