

Coalition of Veterans Organizations

CVO

*Leave No
Veteran Behind*

VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE REPORT

PREPARED BY
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by

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1. In reporting legislation that has been introduced, the same bills and writeups from the previous month will be repeated, with new bills or changes in **boldface**.

2. S. 10: VA Careers Act of 2023: Legislation to bolster efforts to recruit and retain strong clinical and managerial leadership in the VA health care system and make other important improvements to attract clinicians in scarce medical specialties. It has 9 co-sponsors, none from IL.

3. S. 42: Build for Veterans Act of 2023: This infrastructure bill has **9** co-sponsors, none from IL.

4. S.141: Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act: It expands the program for home care. It has **25** co-sponsors, none from IL. H. R. 542 (House version) has **72** co-sponsors, 4 from IL (Underwood, Budzinski, Schakowsky, Ramirez).

5. Cong Julia Brownley introduced H. R. 2413: Dental Care for Veterans Act, the same as H. R. 96 and H.R. 914. It has **11** co-sponsors, **9** from IL (Garcia, Quigley, Schakowsky, Underwood, Krishnamoorthi, Casten, Jackson, **Kelly, Davis**).

I can email you the letters that I send (one for those who previously co-sponsored and one for those who have not) so you can use it, or if you give me the email address of a congressman's DC staffer who handles veterans issues, I can email it, but if they don't co-sponsor, you can call them 2 weeks later.

Brownley's Office has not sent a "Dear Colleagues" letter (asking other congressmen to co-sponsor), but if she does, I will spam it out.

This week, let's concentrate on Cong. Schneider, Foster, Ramirez. Call their offices, where you can either call them directly, or call the DC Switchboard, 866-220-0044, and ask the operator to be connected to their office. (If the automated answers, don't give them your zip code, or you will automatically be transferred to the office of your congressman. Tell the staffer to ask the cong. To co-sponsor H. R. 2413. Don't say that you're with CVO, as they will see that these are an effort of a single veteran group.

6. H. R. 2410: VET CARE Act of 2023: It establishes a pilot program for dental care, but it's only for those with diabetes who are 40-70 years old. It has **12** co-sponsors, none from IL. We are not supporting this bill.

7. H. R. 1767: Bill to restore GI Bill education benefits to defrauded student veterans. It was introduced by Cong. Delia Ramirez (IL) and has **17** co-sponsors, 2 from IL (Schakowsky, Budzinski).

8. S. 1954: Improving Whole Health for Veterans with Chronic Conditions Act. This bill was introduced by Sen. Bernie Sanders, whereby veterans would have to get heart or kidney disease in order to get dental care. It has 11 co-sponsors, 1 from IL (Durbin). H. R. 4150 is the house version. It has 1 co-sponsor (not from IL). We are not supporting these bills, because veterans should not have to contract health problems in order to get treatment for another.

9. S. 106: Commitment to Veteran Support and Outreach Act. It would give \$ to states for VA outreach. It has 13 co-sponsors, none from IL. H. R. 984 (House version) has 35 co-sponsors, one from IL (Underwood).

10. Veterans and Family Advisory Council (monthly meetings):

We are still working to get a computer room for veteran use at JBVAMC. It is important for veterans who do not have internet access at home, or who have access, but no printer. Computers are needed for filling out forms, working on resumes, applying for jobs, etc. We are now told that it will be in a new building being built in the vicinity of the commercial area on the NW corner of Ogden/Damen.

There are some places at JBVAMC where the WiFi is not very strong, and this matter is being addressed. If you are aware of any such points, we are now told to call 855-559-5784, the number on the “Guest Wireless Now Available” paper with the info on the WiFi.

I proposed that we hire a massage therapist. There are many soft tissue injuries that can best be treated with a massage therapist. It was well-received.

11. VACCC: We’re trying to get the Cook County Board to approve what we need. Long time CVO members will recall when we attended the hearing as a group, where we had our picture taken in the lobby with our banner.

We’ve been waiting for funding in order to hire an outreach coordinator and VSO. We are not doing everything that we want to do, but once we get the \$ and do the hiring, we can do what needs to be done.

My earlier proposal to get mailboxes for homeless veterans is now being addressed. If a person had no address, he can not get many benefits that he could get if he had one. It is also more difficult to submit a job application without an address.

12. At our last meeting, the need for media coverage of the dental issue came up. Show me a person who thinks that getting coverage is easy, and I will show you someone who has never done it.

WFLD’s Natalie Bomke recently did a segment featuring a veteran who needed dental care and how the Veteran Smile program helped him. She did a similar segment when the first dental bill was introduced, in which she also interviewed (then) Cong. Randy Hultgren (R-IL). At the end of this recent segment, she said that 7/9 of the co-sponsors for H. R. 2413 are from IL. I immediately emailed her to say that the present number was 9/11. She replied that she will do another segment, in which she will interview a congressman who supports the bill.

A key to getting coverage is to locate a reporter who has done pieces on veterans’ issues, because he will be more receptive. I noticed a good article on Yahoo’s home page, so I contacted the reporter who does online articles for NBC. She called me and will do a piece in the future, but the Israel situation is getting all the news now.