

Coalition of Veterans Organizations



VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE REPORT

PREPARED 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 10 co-sponsors, none from IL.

3. S. 42: Build for Veterans Act of 2023: This infrastructure bill has 10 co-sponsors, none from IL.

4. S. 141: Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act: It expands the program for home care. It has 27 co-sponsors, none from IL. H. R. 542 (House version) has 76 co-sponsors, 4 from IL (Underwood, Budzinski, Schakowsky, Ramirez). It passed in the House and is going to the Senate.

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 **25** co-sponsors, **12** from IL (Garcia, Quigley, Schakowsky, Underwood, Krishnamoorthi, Casten, Jackson, Kelly, Davis, Ramirez, **Foster, Budzinski**). **Ramirez and Budzinski are on the Veterans Affairs Cmte., and Budzinski is on the Healthcare Subcommittee.**

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.

The national organizations have not been doing their part. In previous congresses, at least the DAV had put out a legislative alert, so that anyone can input his name/address and have letters generated to his congressman/senators. **I have contacted them to request one of these alerts, and this time, they said that they will do this some time in the future.** Please do the same. If there is greater demand, perhaps they will issue the alert. We have had co-sponsors who thanked us for notifying them about the bill, because they were not aware of it. Please contact the other national groups.

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 **13** 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 13 co-sponsors, 1 from IL (Durbin). H. R. 4150 is the house version. It has **4** co-sponsors (none 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 14 co-sponsors, none from IL. H. R. 984 (House version) has **43** co-sponsors, one from IL.

(Underwood).

10. S. 1975: Discharge Review Board Accountability Act of 2023. It would require the GAO to conduct a study on the compliance of discharge review boards with statutory provisions and directives related to liberal consideration of certain conditions and for other purposes. This bi-partisan bill has 4 co-sponsors, none from IL.

11. S. 3452: Fred Hamilton Veterans Lost Records Act. The records of many veterans were lost in the fire at the National Records Center. It would allow veterans to use additional methods to apply for benefits when the government loses or damages their records.

12. Veterans and Family Advisory Council (JBVAMC monthly meetings): I had earlier proposed that the Infusion Clinic get a bell, like many other hospitals have, that a patient rings when he completes his last infusion. They now have it.

I have continued to bring up the need for a computer room like we previously had on the 4th Floor of the Taylor Bldg. We will be getting a Resource Center, that will include computers, but this will be in a facility that is being constructed.

Hines and other VA hospitals have meetings such as this, and we will report on them if someone wants to attend them.

13. VACCC: In order to remain a member of the VACCC, the State now requires us to get a State Charter. The application is a bureaucratic nightmare, but thanks primarily to Tanis Marquette, with some assistance from me, the application was submitted. We are waiting for the Attorney General's Office to approve it, but we need this approval by the end of the week, so that we can renew our membership in the VACCC.

14. I emailed the Illinois Congressional Delegation a paper that listed the bills that we are tracking. It was mostly a cut/paste job from these Veterans Affairs Committee Reports. It was very well-received.

15. Cong. Raja Krishnamoorthi called to tell me that his bill to have a post office named for Vietnam Veterans had passed the House. When his staffer called me to say that the congressman wanted to talk to me, I asked if it would be a recording or a solicitation for his campaign, but he assured me that this was not the case. I was totally surprised.

16. Alderman Gilbert Villegas is the Chairman of the Veterans Committee in the Chicago City Council. His military staffer called to learn more about us. I told him, among other things, about the lack of support from the national organizations for H. R. 2413. He will bring this up at the American Legion's state convention and propose that they support it, but it will probably be too late to have much of an effect.