

Coalition of Veterans Organizations

CVO



*Leave No
Veteran Behind*

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 28 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 **40** 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.

Most of the national organizations have not been doing their part. At least the DAV put out a legislative alert, so that anyone can input his name/address and have letters generated to his congressman/senators. That has resulted in more co-sponsors from other states. Please disseminate their letter to others who may not have received 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 **16** co-sponsors, none from IL. We are not supporting this bill.

7. H. R. 1767: Student Veteran Benefit Restoration Act would restore GI Bill education benefits to defrauded student veterans. It was introduced by Cong. Delia Ramirez (IL) and has **22** co-sponsors, **5** from IL (Schakowsky, Budzinski, Garcia, Krishnamoorthi, **Bost**).

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 14 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 **59** 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. It has 4 co-sponsors, none from IL.

12. S. 3560: Combat Veterans Pre-Enrollment Act of 2024: It has 5 co-sponsors, none from IL.

13. Veterans and Family Advisory Council (JBVAMC monthly meetings): We have guest speakers for certain topics. The April meeting was canceled, but several items are being worked on. A “tracker” is put out for every meeting, and I spam it out on our google group.

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

14. VACCC: CVO was the only group that applied for the state charter, but our application was denied for numerous reasons. Therefore, we will no longer be a member of the VACCC, but we can still attend their meetings, although we can't vote. The next one is Tuesday, June 25, at 1900, at the Lyons Township Hall, 6404 Joliet Rd., Countryside, IL 60625, unless we hear different. If anyone is interested in attending, please tell me.

We were told that this onerous application was set up so that groups, like us, could get a charter and remain active in the VACs, but the result was that it kept out groups not federally chartered. Other groups simply saw that they would not qualify, so they did not bother to apply.

15. On March 27, I emailed a letter to the Commissioners of the Cook County Board, asking them to provide dental care, through the County Care program, to veterans enrolled in VA Healthcare who are ineligible for VA dental care. Comm. Dennis Deer, Chair of the Health and Hospitals Cmte. and Vice-Chair of the Cook County Health Board, immediately replied, requesting a zoom meeting. At the April 19 meeting, I explained our situation. He will look into the matter and get back with me.

Joe Cook contacted Comm. Josina Morita, and we will be meeting with her on April 19. She replaced Comm. Larry Suffredin, the only veteran on the Board.

Even if our proposal is rejected, we at least have documentation that the VA does not provide care that the County does, regardless of immigration status. Hopefully, this would bring attention to this VA deficiency.