

Coalition of Veterans Organizations

CVO



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Veteran Behind*

VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE REPORT

PREPARED BY **LARRY E. NAZIMEK**

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by
Larry E. Nazimek

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**. There has been little activity recently, due to the government shutdown and the attention given to immigration enforcement.
2. H. R.6014: Right to Representation for Department of Veterans Affairs Workers Act of 2025. Introduced by Cong. Ramirez on Nov.10 would codify a VA employee's 'Weingarten right', which is the right to be represented by a person of an employee's choosing during an investigation that an employee reasonably believes may result in disciplinary action. It has **11** cosponsors, all D, 1 from IL (Budzinski).
3. H. R. 1391: Student Veteran Benefit Restoration Act of 2025, would require the VA to restore education benefits to veterans who were enrolled in a program that was shut down. There are 10 cosponsors, all D. The bill was re-introduced by Cong. Ramirez, and IL cosponsors include Schakowsky, Budzinski, and Garcia.
4. H. R. 210: Dental Care for Veterans Act, has **68** cosponsors, all D. There are **13** from IL (Ramirez, Garcia, Casten, Quigley, Krishnamoorthi, Kelly, Budzinski, Jackson, Foster, Underwood). **The only ones from IL who have not cosponsored are all R and Schakowsky, although we have been told that she will cosponsor, as she did on the previous bills.**
5. S. 124/H. R. 472: Restore VA Accountability Act of 2025: This Act would make it easier to fire VA employees, making things easier for DOGE. S. 124 has 17 cosponsors, all R. H. R. 472 has 30 cosponsors, all R. The bill was introduced by Mike Bost (R-IL). There are no cosponsors from IL for either bill. We oppose these bills.
6. H. R. 2970: National Veterans Advocate Act of 2025: It would establish the Office of the National Veterans Advocate. It was introduced by Cong. Rudy Yakym (R-IN) and has 1 cosponsor, not from IL.
7. H. R. 3132: CHOICE (Certified Help Options in Claims Expertise for Veterans) for Veterans Act of 2025: This bill would allow attorneys and agents to charge ill and injured veterans fees of up to \$12,500 or the amount equal to five times the monthly benefits increase, whichever is less, and if the claim results are favorable.

Currently, veterans can choose accredited veterans service organizations, agents and attorneys who provide free claims assistance. These experts ensure veterans receive knowledgeable representation without sacrificing any of their earned benefits. H.R. 3132 weakens accreditation requirements, letting individuals assist veterans before meeting full qualification standards. It has

45 co-sponsors, all Republicans, with Mike Bost as the only one (initial co-sponsor) from IL. We oppose this legislation.

8. S. 1068: Putting Veterans First Act of 2025: The bill would reinstate with backpay all veterans, military spouses, survivors, veteran caregivers and members of the Guard and Reserves—and all VA employees thus far—“illegally fired, demoted or suspended as part of the Trump administration’s mass terminations. It would further protect veterans in the civil service from being included in future mass terminations. It has 21 cosponsors, 20 D and 1 I (Bernie Sanders), with Tammy Duckworth the only one from IL.

9. S. 914/H. R. 1637: Protect Veterans Jobs Act: It would reinstate Veterans who were fired from their jobs as part of Donald Trump and Elon Musk’s indiscriminate purge of federal employees. It was introduced by Tammy Duckworth. It has 10 cosponsors (almost all of whom were initial cosponsors), all D, including Dick Durbin. H. R. 1637 has 96 cosponsors, all D, 6 from IL 6 (Schakowsky, Sorensen, Schneider, Budzinski, Ramirez, Quigley).

10. S. 2145/H. R. 4077: Guard Veterans Health Care Act. It would permit the recovery from the VA of costs from Medicare Advantage and Medicare Rx drug plans and to modify the authority for recovery by the U. S. of reasonable charges for certain care or services furnished to veterans for non-service-connected disabilities, and for other purposes. It has 2 co-sponsors, none from IL. H. R. 4077 has 5 cosponsors, none from IL. These bills are bipartisan, unlike so many others that we are following. These are very new bills, so it will take some time before they have more cosponsors.

11. H. R. 1039: Clear Communication for Veterans Claims Act: This bill requires the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to seek to enter into an agreement with a federally funded research and development center to assess notices that the VA sends to claimants applying for or submitting claims for VA benefits. The VA must report on the findings of the assessment and implement recommendations in the assessment. The bill also extends certain loan fee rates through June 23, 2034, under the VA’s home loan program. This bipartisan bill has 9 cosponsors, 2 from IL (Bost, Budzinski). It passed the House and is at the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs. S. 1311, introduced by Sen. Jim Banks (R-IN), has no cosponsors.

12. H. R. 2550/S. 2837: Protect America’s Work Force Act: To nullify the Executive Order relating to Exclusions from Federal Labor-Management Relations Programs, and for other purposes. It has 226 cosponsors, 217 D and 9 R, 14 from IL (all D), and it passed the House. S. 2837 has 48 cosponsors, 44 D (including both from IL), 2 R, and 2 I.

13. H. R. 1644: Copay Fairness for Veterans Act: This bill eliminates co-pays for medication, hospital care, and medical services related to preventive health services provided by the VA. Much of dental care is preventive in that poor dental care is related to other diseases, but the VA only provides it to 15% of enrolled veterans. This bill is only a step in the right direction, as we

want an end to all VA co-pays. It was introduced by Underwood. There are 5 co-sponsors, all D, with Ramirez the only one from IL.

14. H. R. 6015: VA Care and Benefits Accountability Act: To affirm an agreement, and to nullify certain Executive orders that relate to, collective bargaining by employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Introduced by Cong. Ramirez on Nov. 10, this bill would reverse the illegal and immoral actions taken by President Trump and Secretary Collins that effectively revoked collective bargaining rights from thousands of VA employees. Specifically, this bill would ensure any VA collective bargaining agreement in effect on March 26, 2025, remains fully enforceable through its stated term. It has **41** cosponsors, all D, 4 from IL (Budzinski, Krishnamoorthi, Kelly, Davis).

15. The next VACCC meeting will be at 1900, Mar. 24, location TBD. If anyone plans on attending, please tell me. We are not a member of the VACCC, because we do not have a charter. Joe Cook worked on applying for the State Charter, but they want a statement concerning the Charitable Trust, also under the Illinois Attorney General.

We submitted our paperwork to them a long time ago, but they have been backlogged. Tanis Marquette has called them several times, with the same result, although they have finally responded (due to our time constraint for getting the charter in time to apply for membership in the VACCC, deadline of March 1). They even want our Articles of Incorporation, and I found them. Stay tuned.

16. I continue to serve on the JBVAMC Veterans and Family Advisory Council. I have proposed that the hospital conduct an oral cancer screening day, as was done at the Milwaukee VAMC. Dr. Fulton, the JBVAMC Chief Dentist, replied, in writing, that it wasn't necessary, because it's part of the annual dental exam. I brought up the fact that most veterans are not eligible for dental care, so we will still try to get this screening, perhaps at our annual health fair. Our dental clinic is presently understaffed.

I again brought up the suggestion that we have the National Kidney Fdn. of IL set up their detailed kidney screening, as was done some years ago.

17. Some time ago, I suggested that we nominate good VA employees for the "Starfish Award." It proves that we are not simply a "glass is half empty" organization. I nominated Dr. Emily Kalusetsky, Chief of Outpatient Pharmacy, and she got it. If you have problems with your prescriptions or other pharmacy problems, she is very helpful, treating you as an individual and not a number.