

Coalition of Veterans Organizations

CVO



*Leave No
Veteran Behind*

VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE REPORT

PREPARED BY
LARRY E. NAZIMEK

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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 11 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 **57** 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.

Sens. Bernie Sanders and Sherrod Brown have introduced a bill that would, among a great many things, require the VA to treat dental care like the other medical specialties. We do not yet have a number for the bill.

Aspen Dental will not have a "Day of Service" for veterans, as they have had in many previous Junes. If you dial the phone number they previously used for making appointments for this, you get the recording that they have concluded their Day of Service for 2022.

Gen. John Borling's annual Memorial Day event by Gen. Logan's status had Mark Weiman as the keynote speaker, speaking about the lack of VA dental care.

The American Dental Assn. established a "Give Veterans a Smile" group in 2024. It "encourages dentists to provide pro bone oral health to underserved Veterans and to assist them in finding a dental home."

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 17 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 23 co-sponsors, 5 from IL (Schakowsky, Budzinski, Garcia, Krishnamoorthi, Bost). It passed in the House. **We are waiting for a senator to take up the bill in the senate.**

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 **65** co-sponsors, **2** from IL (Underwood and **Foster**).

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 **7** co-sponsors, none from IL.

12. S. 3560: Combat Veterans Pre-Enrollment Act of 2024: It has **9** co-sponsors, **1 from IL (Durbin)**.

13. H. R. 6656: Stuck on Hold Act: It would reduce wait times for vets making phone calls to the Dept. of Veterans Affairs (VA). The bill would require the VA's telephone call line to include an automated response system that would do two things: 1) advise the caller of the anticipated wait time and 2) offer the caller the ability to receive a callback if the wait time is excessive. **There are 2 co-sponsors, none from IL.**

14. Veterans and Family Advisory Council (JBVAMC monthly meetings): I previously spammed out the "tracker," where action items are listed, along with their status.

The June meeting focused on HUD/VASH and housing for female veterans.

I again raised the point of the unnecessary hassle that vets must put up with if they pick up prescriptions at the JBVAMC Pharmacy, so it will be looked into.

I also pointed out that at the recent JBVAMC Town Haul meeting, that almost all questions dealt with personal issues. The person who screens the questions should have referred these veterans to the Patient Advocates, thus giving priority to calls that ask about things relevant to many area veterans. I was told that the screener was new, and that steps to improve the situation will be looked into for the next meeting.

15. VACCC: The next meeting is Tuesday, June 25, at 1900, and the venue has been changed to Hines. If anyone is interested in attending, please tell me. I previously spammed out info from the VACCC about this meeting.

16. On May 17, Joe Cook and I attended a luncheon in the office of Cook County Commissioner Josina Morita. Representatives of local veteran groups and governmental agencies were present. She had me speak about the dental issue.