



January 2024



Top Left Chapter 16 prepares gifts for Orlando VAH CLC
Top Right: Chief Judge Margret Bartley addressing our 2024 CSO's at Lake Mary
Bottom Left: National Adjutant Barry Jesinoski address members at our Joint Opening Session
Bottom Right: Our 190 CSO's attending our 2024 CSO Certification Training in Lake Mary



DEPARTMENT COMMANDER BRENDA REED

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

I hope all of you had a safe and happy holiday season! If you did not attend (or stay) for our Department Mid Winter Conference you missed meeting our new National Adjutant, Barry Jesinoski, and some wonderful seminars. Our Mid Winter Conference is always the time to learn more about duties and responsibilities of officers and members alike and your opportunity to ask questions. We realize many of you who attend the CSO training have been in attendance since Tuesday and want to get home but it's just one more day. I encourage all of you to make the effort to stay that extra day next year.

I would like to thank all those that assisted with the James A. Haley Christmas Eve dinner from Chapters 4 and members from 67 who came to assist. The inpatients and staff always are very appreciative and this year was no exception.

I always try to include some useful information in my articles every month. This month I would like to inform you of an update to Secure Messaging. The VA is upgrading the Secure Messaging in VA.gov with many new, and much needed, features. Hopefully you will find the following excerpt of use.

"When you visit My HealtheVet's secure messaging feature, you'll find a link to try messaging on VA.gov. You may be prompted to sign in to VA.gov before using this tool. Once you're on the new messages page, you can perform all the important tasks you're used to:

- Send and receive non-urgent messages with VA providers and staff on your care team.
- Organize messages in folders.
- Download and print messages.

They have made some upgrades to make messages more accessible and easier to use. When you try messaging on VA.gov, you may notice these new features:

- The new **mobile-first design** makes it easier to use messages—from wherever you are on any device.
- Just like modern email, the new tool supports **full threading** of messages. Threading collects all the messages in a conversation so that nothing is lost.
- We've **improved accessibility** for all veterans, including those who use screen readers.
- A **more secure** sign-in experience meets modern standards to better protect your data.
- Drafts **autosave** every 10 seconds instead of 2 minutes, so you can trust that your writing is saved."

As always I would like to remind all of you to reach out to a veteran either by phone, text, or email. It's only a moment of your time but could save the life of a veteran suffering alone.

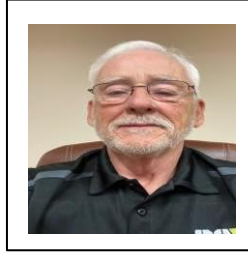


2024 Mid-Winter Conference

March 7-10, 2024 (Please see below regarding the 2024 Mid-Winter Conference change of dates)

Crystal Gateway Marriott
1700 Richmond Highway (formerly Jefferson Davis Hwy)
Arlington, VA 22202
Telephone: 1.800.266.9432 or 1.703.920.3230
Group Name: Disabled American Veterans
\$249 Single/Double





DEPARTMENT SENIOR VICE COMMANDER LAYMOND ROSE

Membership Update: As of this writing, 4 chapters, 109 at 103.9 %, 113 at 100.61%, 123 at 100.34% and 82 at 100.33%, have now achieved their 2023/2024 membership recruitment goals. An additional 13 chapters are within 10 new members of achieving their goals (1, 13, 18, 29, 63, 70, 73, 86, 101, 126, 129, 144 and 158).

Chapter Visits: December was a little less active for me from a travel perspective. I was only able to visit three chapters, 17, 30, and 109. This brings my total chapter visits to 27 for the fiscal year. Hopefully, I will be able to maintain the pace of the last 6 months and visit every chapter this year.

The two most common questions I hear at almost every visit are:

1. How do we get more members to come to meetings?
2. How do we recruit more members and especially the younger generation members?

Personally, I think the answer to both questions is the same, and it is one word – Communication.

We don't communicate with our members or our prospective members. In the case of the first group, our members, I would speculate that 80%, or more of them have not received a piece of mail, an email, a text message, a phone call, or a visit from us in the last 12 months (maybe years, or even never.) Many of your current members may not know where you meet, when you meet, or even why you meet. Some may not even remember that they are a member of DAV.

I know, some chapters send out newsletters (mostly electronically these days) and/or emails. But, to what portion of your total chapter membership list? Usually, it is some portion of the ones you have email address on. In many cases this is only a fraction of the total list.

In the case of prospective members (like the Florida Hot List – currently 68,000+ names), they may not even know who we are, what we do, and certainly not why they should be a member.

At the Department we are aware of these challenges and are currently investigating some solutions or tools to address them. Hopefully, there will be more to come soon.

POW-MIA Update:

The DPAA (Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency) has released its '2023 Year in Review Report', a 50 page report detailing the agency's extensive recovery operations for the fiscal year of October 2022 through September 2023. 2023 was a very successful year for the DPAA and the families of our missing in action with 158 MIA comrades identified and returned to their families! Including 116 from World War II, 38 from the Korean War, and 4 from the Vietnam War. A complete listing of the names, rank and branch of service is included in the report.

You can review, print, or download the complete report at <https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Year-In-Review/>

This report contains over 130 photographs, including photos of actual work in progress at numerous recovery sites. Some of the sites discussed are Germany, Croatia, Hungary, and Poland in Europe. Vietnam, Korea, Thailand, Laos, Saipan, Solomon Islands, and the Philippines in the Pacific. It is well worth your time to download and read this report.

In the past six years DPAA has identified and recovered over 1,000 missing comrades. The 'Year in Review' reports for all six years can also be downloaded from the same location.

As you may know, I am on the National POW-MIA Interim Committee. The committee is currently working on some issues to improve the interaction between DPAA and the individual DAV Departments to enhance communication of the identification of MIAs and support of the families. I will advise you of any progress or developments.

I look forward to seeing and talking with many of you at the Chapter Service Officer training January 2nd to the 5th and/or Mid-Winter immediately thereafter. If you are only planning to attend the training, I urge you to stay for Mid-Winter, if possible, especially if you are, or plan to become, an officer in your chapter. There is much to be learned from the conference agenda, as well as the socializing, discussions, and conversations with your fellow attendees.



DEPARTMENT JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER CHIP HANSON



2023 is now history, we have come to the end of the year. Our Nation has become unsettled. Our leaders cannot agree. This could bring about a downfall not only of our economy, but we could very well lose some of our freedoms.

Abraham Lincoln once stated (A house divided against itself, cannot stand).

Unity starts with the D A V. We are a great organization. We may disagree, but we always work out our differences. We must be an example to our Country.

The first week of January we will be in class to learn and share knowledge of how to help aid and assist Veterans and their families. Take the time to meet other Chapter Service Officers. Learn from each other.

Never forget, that we are on the front line, what we do, and how we do it, affects our Country.

Many of you already know of my respect for General George Patton.

It's time for us to take charge of the situation. As the general once said.

“Lead Me, Follow Me or Get Out of My Way. “

DAV's 2023–2024 Legislative Program book can now be found on DAV's website at <http://dav.la/3n6>. Resolutions contained therein were adopted by the delegates attending our most recent national convention, held in Atlantic City, New Jersey, Aug. 5–8, 2023, and accordingly represent DAV's legislative goals.

I hope this information will be helpful to you in your advocacy efforts throughout the year in support of DAV's legislative program to improve benefits and health services for our nation's ill and injured veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors.

Don't forget to report your chapter's LVAP hours on the LVAP Report for your chapter. The Department is making a more serious effort to ensure all chapters report their LVAP Hours. All chapters should ensure they include any LVAP Hours from our DSO's who are members of your chapter.

First Lady DeSantis has spearheaded an initiative HopeFlorida which can guide veterans on an individualized path to prosperity and economic self-sufficiency by focusing on community collaboration between the private sector, faith-based community, nonprofits and government entities.

Chapters should make contact and make themselves available for services you provide to our veterans.



DEPARTMENT CHAPLAIN REVEREND JIM TAYLOR



A New Year and a New Opportunity for Hope

We are in the season where we celebrate the new year. We do that because a new year is a welcome reminder of a hopeful future, a place of possibility and positive change. There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens. We seek to fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. We can forget what is behind us and strain toward what is ahead.

A new year offers the possibility of restoring relationships and joining us together in seeking a common place of mind and heart. We can desire to find ways to dwell together in unity. We can allow ourselves the opportunity to be open to consider one another and to stir up good work together. I pray the Lord will help us not be tossed back and forth by the waves and blown here and there by every new teaching. Instead help us to grow to become a mature country and people joined together and held together as we grow as one nation.

With the help of the Lord, we can fix that which is broken—whether relationships, lives, marriages, families, finances, or institution. So, today, I write this on behalf of our broken nation, deeply embroiled in self-destructive division and turmoil, in desperate need of healing. I believe DAV can be a light unto all that are in the house. We can let our light shine before our nation so that others may be encouraged to do good work for our nation.

Thank you for attending the Chaplain's Training at our recent Mid-Winter Conference in Lake Mary. Hopefully the next Chaplain's Training will have several more Chapter Chaplains in attendance.

If you bless others, you will be blessed. Conversely, if you hold back when it's within your resources and abilities to be a blessing, your blessings will be withheld. If you live by taking, it will be taken from you in the end. If you live a life of giving, it will, in the end, be given to you. Prejudge or condemn, and you will be prejudged and condemned by your peers.

It was a pleasure meeting some of you for the first time in Lake Mary and seeing some of you again. As announced during our Mid-Winter Conference last week, I am again seeking the office of Department Chaplain.

If I can be assistance at any time, please contact me at Jtaylor@davfla.com.

Our Department Commander and Adjutant have requested that members attending the upcoming Mid-Winter Conference in Washington to make appointments with the Congressional Representatives to discuss our 2024 Critical Policy Goals. Once your appointment is made with your Congressional Representative, please advise our Department Adjutant Andy Marshall of the date and time of your appointment at andy@davfla.com.

Recently, DAV received the 2024 Congressional calendar and learned that Congress will not be in session during the dates of our normally scheduled mid-winter conference, which was scheduled to take place Feb. 25-28, 2024. Therefore, the DAV National 2024 Mid-Winter Conference has been rescheduled for March 7-9. While the new dates are an unprecedented break from the event's traditional week after Presidents Day, moving our most highly visible demonstration of DAV's dedicated advocacy will ensure you, our dedicated members and supporters, are able to meet with your elected officials face-to-face while Congress is in session.

The conference will still take place at the Crystal Gateway Marriott and include our national commander's testimony to a joint session of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees on Thursday, March 7 in the Senate Dirksen Building in room SD-G50. Our opening session will take place later that day at the Crystal Gateway Marriott with various other normally scheduled workshops taking place in the days following, including our National Executive Committee and Board of Directors meetings. Please review the posted schedule for more details.

Blessings to each of you and a Happy New Year.



LVAP HOURS:

The timely and accurate reporting of LVAP hours will be one of my priority goals this fiscal year. Last year only 21 of our 52 chapters reported LVAP hours to the department monthly as required. It is my belief that every chapter is performing functions for which LVAP hours can be claimed – they simply are not reporting those hours. Consequently, we are significantly under-reporting the activity of the Department of Florida.

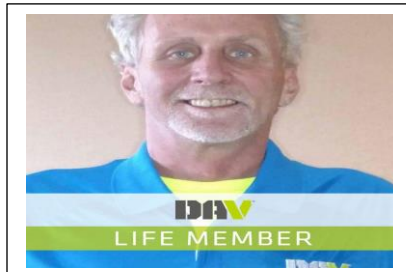
Reporting LVAP hours, by every chapter, is very important to the DAV organization. DAV is required to report volunteer hours to Congress, watchdog groups, members, and donors. Reporting 'ALL' of our volunteer hours can strengthen our lobbying capabilities in congress, elevate the favorable opinion of watchdog groups, and reinforce the trust of our members and donors. *The below chart will be updated and appear in this newsletter monthly going forward so that every chapter will know where they stand.*

October/November 2023 LVAP HOURS REPORTED BY CHAPTER											
Chap #	Current Month	YTD	Chap #	Current Month	YTD	Chap #	Current Month	YTD	Chap #	Current Month	YTD
1	390	1,465	23		963	83		1,614	112		0
4	952	6,818	29		0	84		725	113		1,223
5	213	729	30		824	85		351	123		4,586
6		0	32		747	86		2,022	125		0
7		0	38		2,096	87	644	644	126		0
11		1,398	42		265	90	50	216	129		0
12		0	49		0	94	273	0	133		1,235
13		0	57		467	97		0	144		0
16		3,372	63		0	98		0	148		0
17		0	67		347	101			150		2,928
18		5,719	70		0	108	234	2,864	158		113
20		0	73		0	109	2,415	10,203	159		486
22	249	249	82		705	110		0			

TOTALS 7/1/23-12/31/23 55,374



DEPARTMENT JUDGE ADVOCATE MICHAEL MICHELOTTI



National's Chapter Constitution and Bylaws Guidelines and Suggestions, Article 9 Section 4, Rule 1., indicates the following: *Robert's Rules of Order, Revised* shall govern the Chapter in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with this Constitution and Bylaws, the Department Constitution and Bylaws or the National Constitution and Bylaws. (National C&BL Section 19.3 and Department C&BL Section 3.9, also direct the use of Robert's Rules of Order for conventions and meetings)

U.S. Army Brigadier Gen. **Henry M. Robert** first published Robert's Rules of Order in 1876. Now in its 12th edition, the book serves as the gold standard for parliamentary procedure and interactions, including board and committee meetings.

We will explore the reasons why Robert's Rules of Order are commonly used to conduct meetings.

First Robert's Rules of Order provide a clear and organized framework for conducting business meetings. The rules establish procedures and protocols that help facilitate discussion, deliberation, and decision-making. By following these rules, meetings are less likely to become chaotic and unproductive.

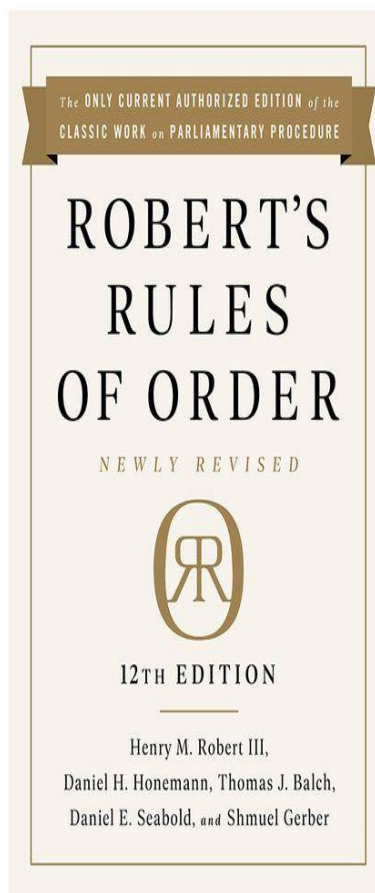
Robert's Rules of Order help to ensure that all meeting participants have an equal opportunity to voice their opinions and contribute to the discussion. The rules outline procedures for how to raise and address motions, as well as guidelines for how to debate and vote on matters. This helps to create a fair and inclusive environment in which all members can participate in the decision-making process.

Robert's Rules of Order promote transparency and accountability within meetings. The rules require that all meeting actions and decisions be recorded and documented in meeting minutes. This helps to ensure that there is a clear record of what occurred during the meeting and what decisions were made.

Robert's Rules of Order promote efficiency and time management in meetings. The rules help to streamline the process by providing guidelines for how to effectively manage discussions, raise and address motions, and conduct votes. This helps to prevent meetings from becoming bogged down in long and unproductive debates and allows for decisions to be made in a timely manner.

Finally, Robert's Rules of Order provide a common framework for conducting meetings. By adhering to these established rules, meeting participants can be assured that the process will be fair, transparent, and efficient. This helps to create a sense of consistency and predictability, which is essential for building trust and confidence in the meeting process.

For a free copy of *Robert's Rules of Order* at <https://robertsrules.org/> Top left, click on "Roberts Rules of Order", here you can choose to view online or download.





Andy Marshall Department Adjutant

Federal Register 2023-28100

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is issuing this proposed rule to address its process for reviewing, determining, and allocating reasonable fees for claim representation, and to address the effect on direct payment of the termination of an agent's or attorney's VA accreditation.

Congress has authorized VA to prescribe reasonable restrictions on the amount of fees that agents or attorneys may charge claimants for services on VA benefits claims. [38 U.S.C. 5904\(a\)\(5\)](#). In addition, VA has the authority to review a fee agreement between an agent or attorney and a claimant and order a reduction in the fee if VA finds that fee is excessive or unreasonable. [38 U.S.C. 5904\(c\)\(3\)\(A\)](#). VA also has the discretion to directly pay the fee of an agent or attorney from a claimant's past-due benefits if the claimant and the agent or attorney have entered into a fee agreement that requests direct payment and meets statutory and regulatory criteria, including the requirement that the fee not exceed 20 percent of the past-due benefits awarded to the claimant. [38 U.S.C. 5904\(d\)](#). VA may issue all necessary or appropriate rules and regulations to carry out these authorities. [38 U.S.C. 501\(a\)](#).

Based on these authorities, VA's Office of the General Counsel (OGC), which acts as the agency of original jurisdiction for reviewing fee agreements, currently performs a "fee reasonableness" review in two circumstances: (1) when the claimant or VA has questioned the reasonableness of the fee set forth in the agreement, and (2) when multiple agents or attorneys provided representation.

To be clear, the default fee allocations of this proposed rule do not relieve attorneys or agents of their ethical obligation not to accept an unreasonable fee. See [84 FR 138, 151](#) (2019) ("[P]ursuant to VA's standards of conduct in [38 CFR 14.632](#), attorneys and agents are prohibited from charging, soliciting, or receiving fees that are clearly unreasonable, and, if an attorney or agent [] is found to have violated this standard of conduct, the attorney or agent would risk losing his or her accreditation to represent claimants before VA."); Model Rules of Prof'l Conduct r. 1.5(a) (Am. Bar Ass'n 2022).

Related to that ethical issue, VA is proposing to update § 14.636(h) to address the effect on direct payment of the termination of an agent or attorney's VA accreditation. Post-termination, VA has no internal enforcement mechanism against these individuals for violating VA's standards of conduct, including the aforementioned standard that prohibits receipt of a fee that is clearly unreasonable; it would therefore complicate the ethical safeguards underpinning this proposed rule if agents or attorneys who have lost accreditation are included. Moreover, as a practical matter, it has been difficult to contact and directly pay agents or attorneys who have had their VA accreditation terminated, because they are no longer responsible for maintaining updated contact information with VA.

VA is proposing additional, minor revisions to § 14.636. First, VA would remove § 14.636(c)(4), since the agency of original jurisdiction's fee eligibility notice under that paragraph would now be termed a fee allocation notice under proposed § 14.636(i)(1). Second, VA would revise § 14.636(e) to use the term "agent or attorney" in lieu of "representative," because only agents and attorneys (not all representatives) can charge a fee. Also in that paragraph, VA would reiterate that fees set forth in a fee agreement, charged, or received for services must be reasonable, consistent with VA's standards of conduct discussed above, and note that fee reasonableness for one agent or



Adjutant's Column Continued

Our annual Chapter Service Officer was well attended with 190 of our volunteer CSO's in attendance. National Adjutant Barry Jesinoski was present for most of the training and gave a short speech and thanked them for their dedication to our fellow veterans. Presenters included NSO Kenneth Gore and Senor NSO Afua Whiteside providing most of the DAV National Training Program. Also assisting were NSO's Ed Bueno, Liza Pere and, NSO Supervisor Matthew Weeg.

Chief Judge Margaret Bartley of the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans' Claims was our featured presenter. VHA presenters included David Issacs our VISN Director and all VHA Directors and Juliana Boor our VARO Director and two members of her staff. In addition, we had a presenter from the Vet Center. Also, we had a presentation on veteran's suicide from FireWatch.

2024 Critical Policy Goals 118th Congress, 2nd Session

1. *Correct inequities and provide parity in compensation benefits for veterans and survivors.*

DAV will fight for concurrent receipt of earned compensation and military payments without offsets and parity with other federal program for survivors receiving DIC benefits.

2. *Implement the PACT Act and address gaps in toxic exposure benefits.*

Thousands of disability claims have been submitted to the Department of Veterans Affairs following the passage of the PACT Act, but far too many veterans who have suffered from toxic and environmental exposure still do not qualify for benefits. Our Nation must ensure these veterans receive the care and benefits they have rightfully earned.

3. *Ensure equality in VA care, services and benefits for women, LGBTQ+ and minority veterans.*

The VA must ensure these veterans have access to benefits and timely, high quality and specialized health care services to the same extent as their peers. The VA must provide a safe, welcoming and harassment free environment at all its health care facilities.

4. *Provide a full spectrum of long-term care options for service-disabled and aging veterans.*

The VA must have a comprehensive geriatric and extended care program that includes a broad range of care options and supportive services-from home based primary care to long term institutional care to assist a rapidly aging veteran population particularly veterans with service connected disabilities.

5. *Booster mental health resources to ensure reduction of veteran suicides*

Despite increased resources for VA mental health services and targeted efforts, rates of suicide among veterans have increased. By improving lethal means safety efforts, enhancing care for veterans in crisis and requiring training for community partners, the VA can help reduce suicide for at-risk veterans and ensure all veterans have timely access to needed mental health services.

6. *Expand the VA's capacity to deliver timely, high-quality care to veterans.*

The VA must remain the primary provider and coordinator of care to ensure the best health outcomes for veterans, particularly veterans with service-connected disabilities who rely on the VA for all or most of their care. This will require new investments to hire and retain clinical staff, rebuilding health care infrastructure and modernization of information technology systems.

Military and Veterans' Week at the Capitol February 19-23

The week-long observance is held in conjunction with members of the Florida Legislative Military and Veteran's Caucus, Florida Veterans Foundation, and other Military and Veterans Service Organizations.

During the week of February 19-23, the 2nd Floor of the Capitol Building will be filled with many veteran's based and military themed organizations to showcase the men and women in uniform and the earned services, benefits and support our veterans have earned as a result of their honorable service to our State and Nation.

Various state agencies, organizations and programs will have tables set up for visitors on the 2nd floor of the Capitol Building throughout the week. Representatives will be present to chat with the public and share their mission.

Chapters visited by Department Line Officers and Adjutant since Department Convention: 1, 4, 11, 18, 22, 23,32, 57, 70, 82, 84, 86, 87, 90, 97, 101, 09, 110, 119, 125, 129, 158

H.R. 3848, The Housing Our Military Veterans Effectively Act

This bill addresses the funding and administration of certain Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) programs related to homeless veterans.

Specifically, the bill increases the maximum rate of per diem payments provided by the VA to entities (i.e., grant recipients or authorized entities) that furnish services and transitional housing to homeless veterans. The bill also authorizes the VA to provide a maximum of 200% of the otherwise applicable maximum rate to a certain number of grant recipients and authorized entities in each fiscal year from FY2024 through FY2026. Under the bill, the VA may not provide more than 12,000 per diem payments in a fiscal year.

Through FY2024, the bill authorizes the VA to use certain available funds to provide specified assistance to homeless veterans who are participating in the Department of Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program. Such assistance may include food, shelter, clothing, transportation for specified purposes, and technology items such as smartphones.

The bill authorizes the VA to collaborate with organizations to manage the use of VA land for homeless veterans to live and sleep.

The bill also extends certain loan fee rates through May 18, 2032, under the VA's home loan program.

Passed House (12/05/2023)

H.R.542 - Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act of 2023

This bill addresses home care and caregiver programs provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Under the bill, the cost of providing noninstitutional alternatives to nursing home care generally may not exceed 100% of the cost that would have been incurred if a veteran had been furnished VA nursing home care. (Under current law, these expenditures are limited to 65% of the cost.) However, for specified veterans, the VA may exceed 100% of the cost if it determines the higher cost is in the best interest of such veterans (i.e., veterans with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, a spinal cord injury, or a condition the Secretary determines to be similar to such conditions).

Among other requirements, the VA must:

- seek to enter into an agreement with the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly in certain areas to furnish noninstitutional alternatives to nursing home care;
- implement various programs (e.g., the Veteran Directed Care program) to expand access to home- and community-based services;

- provide specified support and benefits to caregivers of certain disabled veterans;
- implement a pilot program to provide homemaker and home health aide services to veterans who reside in communities with a shortage of home health aides; and
- ensure the availability of home and community-based services for Native American veterans.

For veterans or family caregivers who are discharged from the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers, a caregiver support coordinator must provide for a personalized transition to an appropriate program.

The Veterans Health Administration must review programs administered through the Office of Geriatric and Extended Care to ensure consistency in program management, eliminate service gaps at the medical center level, and ensure the availability of and access to home and community-based services.

The bill also extends certain loan fee rates through February 4, 2032, under the VA's home loan program.

Passed House (12/05/2023)

H.R.3581 - COPE Act

This bill addresses various Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) issues, including the family caregiver program and VA facility security.

Specifically, the bill authorizes the VA to award grants to implement, coordinate, improve, or enhance mental health counseling, treatment, or support for family caregivers of veterans participating in the family caregiver program.

The bill also authorizes the VA to make contributions to local authorities to mitigate the risk of flooding on local property adjacent to VA medical facilities.

Additionally, the Government Accountability Office must report on the provision of mental health support to caregivers of veterans.

The bill also requires the VA to annually survey its police chiefs, facility emergency management leaders, facility directors, or individuals acting in such a capacity to collect information regarding security at VA facilities.

Passed House (12/04/2023)

H.R.1530 - Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2023

This bill addresses certain requirements related to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical disability examinations for purposes of benefit claims and other administrative matters related to the benefit claims processes and personnel.

First, the bill updates procedures related to the publishing of VA disability benefit questionnaire forms. Specifically, the VA does not have to publish certain forms if it determines the form could not reasonably be completed to a clinically acceptable standard by someone who is not an employee or contractor of the VA.

The bill also requires the VA to report on its efforts to provide reimbursement for a veteran's travel to a facility, regardless of whether the facility is inside or outside of the United States, when such travel is incident to a medical disability examination for purposes of VA benefits.

The VA must also include certain elements in contracts it enters with non-VA providers to provide medical disability examinations. Specifically, the contracts must require that every communication from the provider to the applicant regarding the scheduling of a medical disability examination must be transmitted to any person or organization that is legally designated by the applicant and is recognized for the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of claims.

Additionally, the VA must partner with veterans service organizations and other stakeholders (as determined by the VA) to implement an outreach program for veterans regarding (1) contact information for non-VA providers that are providing medical disability examinations, and (2) the requirement for veterans to provide personally identifiable information when contacted by such providers to verify their identity.

The VA must report on improving its support of governmental veterans service officers.

The VA must establish a Board of Veterans' Appeals internship program for individuals enrolled in the first or second year of law school.

The VA must also implement a program to furnish student loan repayment benefits or reimbursements for courses, bar exams, or bar membership dues to certain attorneys who agree to work for the VA for at least 3 years.

The bill increases the maximum possible number of judges presiding over the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims to nine judges.

Finally, the VA must report on improving access to tele-hearings for Board of Veterans' Appeals hearings.

Passed House (09/20/2023)

S.112 - A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to strengthen benefits for children of Vietnam veterans born with spina bifida.

This act addresses Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits and care for certain children with spina bifida or other birth defects. The act requires the VA to provide health care, job training, and monetary benefits for the duration of the child's life. The act covers a child, regardless of age or marital status, who (1) has spina bifida and is the natural child of a Vietnam veteran or a veteran of specified service in Korea or Thailand who was conceived after the date on which the veteran entered service in Vietnam, Korea, or Thailand; or (2) has certain birth defects and is the natural child of a woman Vietnam veteran.

The act requires the VA to establish an advisory council on health care and benefits for covered children. Additionally, the VA must establish care and coordination teams for covered children. At least every 180 days, the teams must conduct outreach to ensure the continued care of the children and assist with any necessary changes in care.

The VA must report to Congress a list of conditions that will trigger outreach to covered children and must attempt to contact such children as soon as practicable after the identification of a condition.

The Veterans Benefits Administration and the Veterans Health Administration must enter into a memorandum of understanding to better assist covered children.

Latest Action: 10/06/2023 Became Law [Public Law No: 118-18](#). ([All Actions](#))

January 1, 2024 New Years Day



January 15 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day



January 15 Civil Rights Day



January 21 Grandma's Day

