

# Did You Know?

**(By: Raymond P. Toczek Legion Service Officer)**

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That as Chairman of the 1<sup>st</sup> Division VA&R committee I am required to make a report each year to that Division. I thought it would be informative to our members who live outside the 1<sup>st</sup> Division to see what we have accomplished up north. Here is my report:

It has been a pleasure and honor to serve the First Division as your representative on the VA&R Commission for the 2017-2018 year as well as one of the two Division service officers. I attended two VA&R meetings which were held at our Bloomington headquarters as well as the Washington D.C. conference. New VA benefit law changes continue to be signed into law and every effort was made to get this info to the Division level. From there it is my hope that it filters down to the District and Post levels. Many methods were used; my monthly articles in the Department and Division newsletters, oral presentations before the Division meetings and having handouts available at those meetings. I also hosted several Power Point presentations at local posts, senior centers, local libraries and Hines VA hospital. These presentations covered the entire spectrum of VA benefits from headstones to home loans and pensions to hospital care. I hope to do more of these in the fall if appointed to this position again

At last count Posts in the 1<sup>st</sup>. Division will have 34 resolutions submitted to our Department convention. We will once again be #1 in resolution submission. One that was submitted two years ago regarding the Veterans Administration Bronze Medallion for marking private headstones was accepted and Congress passed Public Law 114-315. Veterans who died prior to 1990 and purchased their own headstone can now have the family order this Medallion. I did for my dad's headstone and put it on myself. It's an easy process.

I have been the editor of a monthly article in the Department newsletter entitled "Did You Know" for over eleven years now and have received many favorable comments. You can view these articles (back one year) on the Department web site [www.illegion.org](http://www.illegion.org). On the home page click on "News and Events" and on the dropdown menu click on "latest news". Under Quick Links then click on Dept. Newsletters and you can view my last twelve articles. Feel free to copy and paste these articles into your district or post newsletters. Just give credit to Department if you do. I have also cohosted a monthly BINGO game at VA Jesse Brown hospital. Post 183, 777 and 806 were cosponsors. These games are held at 2:00 on the first Monday of the month. Veteran patients come down from the wards and outpatient clinics to play. We average 30-40 veterans per game and \$200+ is given out in prizes and raffle gifts each month. Donations for this are welcome. Prior to and just after the games I answer questions from the audience on their Veterans Administration benefits. A few claims were started this way.

The VA&R Director of the Chicago office, Wayne Macejak, has again had to cope with several personnel changes. Al Pizarro, former 9<sup>th</sup> District Commander left as one of our Service Officers and Carolina Contreras returned to replace him. She is fluent in Spanish and will also help female vets with their special claims e.g. Military Sexual Trauma. Our office now has walk-in hours 9-12:00 Monday thru Thursday. At other times veterans may call to make an appointment. Telephone hours are Monday through Friday from 8:00 to 4:00 with 24/7 voicemail after that. The number is 312-980-4266.

To be continued in the next newsletter.