

## Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission

Saturday October 5, 2019

The Department of Illinois Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission met at Legion headquarters in Bloomington, Illinois on October 5, 2019. The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. The following members were present:

Rodger Bennett (4<sup>th</sup> Div.) Chairman  
Tom Nebgen (3<sup>rd</sup> Div.) Vice Chairman  
Ashley "Dave" Davis (2<sup>nd</sup> Div.)  
Krystle Huelsmann (5<sup>th</sup> Div.)

Absent: Raymond Toczek (1<sup>st</sup> Div.)

Guests: Carolina Contreras (VA&R Service Officer)

Ray Toczek's Report: Starting January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 veterans can take their DD 214 or other proof of service directly to the Secretary of State to have "veteran" placed on their driver's license. They will no longer have to go to a local Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs office to get it certified.

The new State Veterans Home in Chicago is now scheduled to open and receive its first residents in April of 2020. They are not taking applications at this time. What they have developed, however, is what they are calling an "Interest List" of Veterans who think they would like to be admitted to the Chicago Home. About 200 beds will be available for housing. The information should be sent to Len Winnicki, (who works for the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs) at [Lenard.Winnicki@illinois.gov](mailto:Lenard.Winnicki@illinois.gov) and should include:

Last Name	First Name	Phone Number	Street Address	City	Zip Code	Date Inquired
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Once they get closer to the opening they will send out application packets. At this time, based on the current construction schedule, they will start mailing out packets in November 2019.

There has been a slight change in the Chicago Legion office. Walk-ins are now from 9:00 to 12:00, Monday through Thursday. Also from 1:00 to 3:00 on Tuesday and Thursday. Our Hines VA hospital mini-office is now manned on Tuesday and Thursday from 9:00 until 2:00 by Wayne Macejak and on Wednesday from 10:00 until 2:00 by Ray Toczek. Appointments can be scheduled at either office by calling 312-980-4266.

The Blue Water Navy Act was signed into law. Navy veterans and other branches of service e.g. Marines who served on vessels within the 12 mile limit of Vietnam can now get compensation

for the presumptive Agent Orange conditions. Although no payments will begin until January of 2020 veterans and surviving spouses are encouraged to file now.

Resolution results from Dept. Convention:

#1	Variety of sleep apnea machines	APPROVED
#2	Two levels of compensation for Tinnitus	APPROVED
#4	CHOICE Act changes	APPROVED

Resolution results from Nat'l Convention:

#1 renumbered #28	APPROVED WITH AMENDMENTS
#2 renumbered #29	Rejected
#4 renumbered #31	Rejected

There were others that were submitted from the Illinois Legislative Commission and they will be reporting the results at their own meeting.

Ray Toczek talked to Nat'l about the rejections. They felt the two levels for Tinnitus was too subjective as there is no medical equipment available to test for that. It would only be based on the veteran's word. Ray Toczek will be reworking it for next year.

The CHOICE ACT change was rejected because that ACT no longer exists.

Ray Toczek has developed a good liaison with Melvin Brown at Nat'l who coordinates the entire country's resolutions. He was able to send Ray a list of those resolutions which are still on the books and will not have to be resubmitted in 2020.

Carolina Contreras reported that the claims for Blue Water will start January 1, 2020. Please turn in claims now for them to be worked on in January.

The VA has not changed the dates for claim filing even though the American Legion dates have been opened. Veterans who are not eligible for VA healthcare can still go through registration to document in case of Agent Orange, etc.

A CBOC clinic will be opening in Bloomington in about a month.

The VA is supposed to pay back emergency room costs, as long as it not co-payments from other insurance companies.

Under the VA Home Loan, they have found that funding fees have been charged and are being refunded.

Property tax changes through the VA disabilities percentage are being prorated for the amount of time in the home instead of only starting on January 1<sup>st</sup>.

The Bill for the Illinois Veterans Grant amends for Illinois Veterans to transfer their credit to a qualified dependent. One dependent at a time can use the credits.

Claims for processing has been slowed due to a Regional Mail System malfunction. The claims effected were those that were submitted late August and early September. These claims may not be established or in their case files.

Starting January disabled veterans can shop at the Exchanges. The method of how to get on base is still being discussed on whither the VA card or the newer Driver License would suffice to enter.

The committee was visited by the Department Commander Weber and Department Senior Vice Commander Fischer. Both Commander Weber and Senior Vice Commander Fischer discussed the Legion Act Applications as well as the incentive from National to sign members who are on the 2910 list and DCM.

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:13 a.m. The next meeting will be held before the Spring DEC.

Respectfully submitted,

Krystle Huelsmann  
Secretary, VA&R Commission