



NACVSO Priorities for the 118th Congress

Improve support for County and Governmental VSOs:

Governmental veterans service offices (GVSOs) at the State, County, Tribal and Municipal levels are on the frontline of assisting veterans who have “borne the battle”. County Veterans Service Officers (CVSO) and their local equivalent carry a significant workload for the federal government when it comes to implementing VA policies and programs. That workload includes but is not limited to filing of disability claims, advocacy, healthcare, community care, educational benefits, death benefits, and much more. Currently, the federal government provides no fiscal support to CVSOs or local equivalents to carry out these duties. CVSO offices are often one of the lowest funded in county government with no unified funding mechanism to bolster efforts. Across the nation, CVSOs face disparities in staffing, technology, education and training, and outreach due to the sole reliance on local sources.

NACVSO encourages members of Congress to support Commitment to Veteran Support and Outreach Act (CVSO Act)

The CVSO Act would:

- Provide funding for CVSOs or their local equivalent (GVSOs) to carry out programs/services to improve outreach and assistance to veterans and eligible dependents.
- Funding may be used to hire new or additional CVSO/GVSOs, provide training for existing staff, or stand-up new offices in underserved regions to serve veterans more effectively.
- Support would aid in implementation of recent historical legislation creating unfunded mandates for CVSO/GVSOs.
 - PACT Act
 - Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act
 - MISSION Act

NACVSO encourages members of Congress to pass Governing Unaccredited Representatives Defrauding VA Benefits Act (GUARD VA Benefits Act)

- This Act would reimpose criminal penalties for soliciting or charging unauthorized fees with respect to claims representation before the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Passage would dissuade bad actors from preying on an already vulnerable veteran and dependent populations.
- No veteran or eligible family member should ever pay for services during the initial claim process.

“A Veterans Service Organization, Focused on Your Benefits”



Improve benefit processes and VA oversight:

CVSOs/GVSOs account for the largest workforce of VA Accredited Representatives in the Nation and understand the bottlenecks and challenges within the VA benefit application process and areas that need modernization.

NACVSO encourages Congress/VA to take the following actions:

- Enhanced VBA systems access to CVSOs/GVSOs based on Government-to-Government partnership similar that of DOJ or HHS in relation to Police and Human Services
- Intergovernmental liaisons for CVSOs/GVSOs (like Congressional liaisons) at the VHA Medical Centers and/or VBA Regional Offices **(H.R. 1530)**
- Require VA contractors to communicate with the veteran’s representative for disability exams **(H.R. 1530)**.
- Make all VA Disability Questionnaires (DBQ) public **(H.R. 1530)**.
 - Currently the Audiology and others are not publicly available.
- Increase oversight/overhaul of Appeals Modernization (AMA).
 - All too often initially denied claims get put in a perpetual “appeals cycle”.
 - Cut out the practice of End Product Code “EP Code” manipulation to make claim adjudication seem shorter than it really is.
- Improve VA employee feedback and make it transparent to VSO when a Duty to Assist error is made (DTA).
 - A DTA is an error that is committed by VA staff through no fault of the veteran claimant.
 - When a DTA is discovered commonly at the Higher-level Review, it is not sent back to the VA employee who made the DTA to correct but sent to the National Work Queue to be corrected by another VA employee.
- Re-instate pre-decision review authority (historical 48-hr review) for claims representatives.
 - Helps to reduce the volume of Supplemental or Higher-Level Reviews.
 - Mitigates the possibility of a DTA before it happens.

Improve Access to Care:

NACVSO encourages VA to take the following actions:

- Reduce barriers to enrollment with automatic health care enrollment at discharge.
- Cover costs of emergency care for veterans 60 days following their VHA enrollment regardless of if they have been seen by a VHA provider **(H.R. 815)**.
- Create online CHAMPVA enrollment/tracking for 100% disabled veterans’ dependents **(H.R. 426)**

