



CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES

**2016 Annual Report
of the
CCD Veterans Task Force**

(formerly the CCD Veterans & Military Families Task Force)

OVERVIEW OF 2016 ACTIVITIES:

The CCD Veterans Task Force (Task Force) was active throughout 2016 in advocating for policies and following issues of concern to veterans with disabilities and military family members with disabilities. In 2016, the Task Force achieved several legislative victories, informed policymakers and influenced legislation through fact sheets, support letters and educational materials, and served as a regular forum (on the second Thursdays of most months) for highlighting relevant issues and exchanging information.

2016 VICTORIES:

The Veterans Task Force was instrumental in the following legislative victories during 2016:

- **Removed Harmful NDAA Language Related to Section 503/VEVRAA:** The Task Force was successful in getting pending language removed from the fiscal year (FY) 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that would have weakened the nondiscrimination and affirmative hiring provisions in federal contracts for veterans (through the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974) and individuals with disabilities (Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973). The harmful language would have exempted federal defense contractors from complying with executive order 13673. The Task Force organized a [CCD-wide letter](#), signed by 14 national organizations, asking the leadership of the House and Senate Armed Services Committee to strip the harmful language in the final FY17 NDAA conference report. Congressional leaders agreed with the Task Force position and removed the language from the final bill, which was signed into law on December 23, 2016.
- **Stopped Veterans Bill Provision That Would Have Limited Section 503/ VEVRAA Compliance:** The Task Force was successful in stopping a provision in a veterans bill (H.R. 5936) that would have allowed entities who partnered with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs through Veteran Care Agreements to shirk contracting responsibilities, including the affirmative hiring provisions of the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act and Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act. Task Force Members offered alternative language to ensure VEVRAA and Section 503 were included in the proposed Veteran Care Agreements. In the end, the U.S. House removed the entire section on Veteran Care Agreements.
- **Established A National Center and Advisory Board on Toxic Exposure of Veterans:** Congress finalized the Toxic Exposure Research Act, which the CCD Veterans Task Force supported through a [2015 letter](#). The Toxic Exposure Research Act was included in H.R. 6416, the Jeff Miller and Richard Blumenthal Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2016, which was signed into law on December 16, 2016 P.L. 114-315. The legislation created a national center for research on the diagnosis and treatment of health conditions of the descendants of veterans



exposed to toxic substances during their service in the Armed Forces. It also established an advisory board for the center to determine links between exposure to harmful materials and emergence of debilitating health conditions.

INFLUENCED POLICYMAKERS THROUGH LETTERS, FACT SHEETS & COMMENTS:

The Task Force was engaged throughout 2016 in educating policymakers and the general public about Task Force positions and views on legislation and priorities.

- The Task Force organized a [letter](#), signed by 11 national organizations, in support of full funding for the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program that assists veterans, including veterans with disabilities, who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness. (November 14, 2016)
- The Task Force organized letters to the House and Senate sponsors of the Protection and Advocacy for Veterans Act ([H.R. 5128](#) and [S. 3141](#)) to provide veterans access to protection and advocacy support to ensure proper care, particularly in the areas of mental health and substance use. (September 9, 2016)
- The Task Force organized a CCD-wide [letter](#) opposing language in the U.S. House and U.S. Senate FY17 NDAA that would have weakened important nondiscrimination and affirmative hiring provisions intended for people with disabilities and veterans, including those with service-connected disabilities. (July 26, 2016)
- The Task Force organized a [letter](#), signed by eight national organizations, asking the U.S. Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) to address the needs of veterans with disabilities by establishing a DOL VETS Veterans with Disabilities Program with a Director. (May 9, 2016)

In addition, the Task Force developed fact sheets on the [Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program](#) and [VEVRAA/Section 503](#), established a [policy for signon letters](#), identified [2016 priorities and planned activities](#), and contributed veterans-related priorities and concerns to the CCD-wide transition document, CCD Ad Hoc Task Force on Poverty, and Social Security notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) on evaluating medical evidence in Social Security applications.

FORUM FOR INFORMATION EXCHANGES:

The Task Force facilitated discussions during monthly meetings on a wide range of topics, including the Commission on Care, Advisory Committee on Veterans Employment, Training, and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO), veterans-related provisions in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) final regulations, 501 regulations, Veterans Transportation Service final rule, implementation of the Disabled Military Child Protection Act, and veterans' studies conducted by RAND and Virginia Commonwealth University. In addition, the Task Force hosted two guest speakers:



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- Carl Blake, Associate Executive Director of Government Relations at Paralyzed Veterans of America, updated the Task Force on meetings between veteran service organizations and the Trump transition team. (December 8, 2016)
- Marian Vessels, Director of the Mid-Atlantic ADA Center, The Center is one of 10 regional offices around the country that provide information and training programs about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In recent years, they have begun to serve increasing numbers of veterans and military families with questions about the applicability of the ADA to their circumstances. (April 14, 2016)

Submitted by the cochairs:

Heather Ansley, Paralyzed Veterans of America

Ron Drach, National Organization on Disability

Maynard Friesz, Easterseals

Susan Prokop, Paralyzed Veterans of America