

## Veterans and Military Families Task Force 2012 Annual Report

We dedicate this report to our late co-chair; colleague and friend, Bill Jefferson, whose cheerful presence and enthusiastic devotion to serving veterans with disabilities inspired us and made it a pleasure to share our work together.

The task force held two CCD wide forums this year to focus on issues of interest to veterans as people with disabilities. Outside stakeholders, including veterans and military service organizations, also were invited to attend these events. In March, the task force held a forum on employment programs and services affecting veterans with disabilities as people with disabilities. This event prompted a webinar on this topic in July sponsored by EEOC and Goodwill. In November, the task force held a forum featuring speakers from DOJ, HHS, Easter Seals and Autism Speaks on long term services and supports for veterans and military family members with disabilities.

Throughout the year, we received briefings on a variety of issues and topics including: the Independent Budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs; the VA's Veteran Community Partnership Initiative; EEOC efforts to remove employment barriers for veterans with disabilities; the US Marine Corps Family Member Care Programs; the DoD Office of Exceptional Family Member Programs; and the VA Homeless Veterans Initiative.

The task force worked with the Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG) on addressing access to VA mental health services. In April, the task force members combined with the MHLG to send a letter to VA mental health leaders regarding our concerns about access to care and offering our assistance. Forty-one organizations signed on to the letter. Leaders from the MHLG and the task force subsequently met with VA's mental health staff. Our efforts resulted in a presentation by Dr. Jan Kemp, Director of VA Suicide Prevention Program, at the MHLG July meeting

We collaborated with the Education Task Force on legislation contained in the National Defense Authorization Act [NDAA] attempting to improve benefits for children with autism and developmental disabilities through the military family health program Tricare.

The task force worked with the Employment Task Force in submitting comments on the Section 503 proposed regulations concerning employment opportunities for people with disabilities with federal contractors. We also provided comments on Family and Medical Leave Act regulations affecting exigency leave and military caregiver leave.

The task force wrote letters of support for legislation offered by Senators Webb and Murray to instill greater accountability in higher education institutions serving recipients of DoD Transition Assistance Program payments and GI Bill benefits. Other letters included support for legislation (H.R. 4329) to rectify inequitable treatment of survivors with disabilities under military Survivor Benefits Plans; for review of settlements under the Federal Torts Claims Act to make sure that

these settlements do not hinder the ability of people with disabilities to live in the community; and for legislation to establish a grant program to help nonprofits perform housing adaptations and repairs for low-income veterans and disabled veterans (H.R. 6381/S. 3614).

The task force submitted written testimony to the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Health, regarding efforts to encourage community support for veterans.

In 2013, the task force plans to follow up with DoJ and HHS on their efforts to advance home and community based services for veterans with disabilities; monitor the release of recommendations by DoD on Medicaid services for military family members with disabilities; support Cong. Langevin's legislation for a veteran homebuyer accessibility tax credit; and continue to support legislation not passed in this session.

#### Co-chairs

Heather Ansley, United Spinal/Vets First  
Susan Prokop, Paralyzed Veterans of America  
Leonard Selfon, Paralyzed Veterans of America