



NH STATE VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date: 10 November 2020
Location: Virtual ZOOM

OFFICERS and VOTING MEMBERS in attendance:

Paul Lloyd - Chair
Diane Domenicis - Vice Chair
Denise DeBlois - Secretary
Joseph DiChiaro, Jr. - Chaplain
Kelly Dobens - Treasurer
David Kenney - Chair Emeritus

Air Force Association

Kevin Grady (prim)

Air Force Sergeants Association

Ray Hayes (alt)

American Legion

Mike Lopez (prim)
Bill Roy (alt)

AUSA Col. Cross Chapter

Greg d'Arbonne (prim)

Catholic War Veterans

Denise DeBlois (prim)

Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association

Raymond Schwendeman (prim)

Disabled American Veterans

Andrew Patterson (prim)

Korean War Veterans

Mike Lopez (prim)

Marine Corps League

Military Officers Association (MOAA)

Peter Burdett (prim)

Joseph DiChiaro Jr. (alt)

Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH)

National Guard Association of NH

Peter Duffy (prim)

NH Army Retiree Council

Frank Musmanno (prim)

NH National Guard Enlisted Association

NH Veterans Association

Kelly Dobens (prim)

Reserve Officers Association of NH

David Kenney (prim)

Rolling Thunder

Diane Domenicus (prim)

Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)

Paul Lloyd (prim)

Darwin Beeman (alt)

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA-41)

Ray Goulet (prim)

Legislative Members:

Patricia Klee

Al Baldasaro

LEGISLATIVE ADVISORS: (non-voting):

Governor's Office - Jane Graham

Senator Maggie Hassan - Justin Troiano

Senator Jeanne Shaheen - Chris Scott

Congressman Chris Pappas - Patrick Carroll

Congresswoman Annie Kuster - Tom Giancola

COMMITTEE ADVISORS/AGENCIES:

Kevin Forrest, Director, VAMC Manchester, NH

Dr. Brett Rusch, Director, VAMC White River Junction, VT

BG David J. Mikolaities - Adjutant General NHNG
Warren Perry, Deputy Adjutant General- NHNG
Shawn Buck, NH State Veterans Cemetery
Margaret LaBrecque, NH Veterans Home
Amy Cook, DHHS
John Reed, Martin's Point
Barry Conway, Sage Emeritus
Jorge Dreusicke, VFW National Legislative Chairman

GUESTS: None

OPEN MEETING/CALL TO ORDER: Paul Lloyd, Chairman, convened meeting at 1700.

Pledge of Allegiance: Chairman

Invocation: Joseph DiChiaro, Jr.

Moment of Silence: For all service members who have passed since our last meeting.

Welcome - Remarks of the Chair: Paul welcomed everyone.

Introduction of New Members/Guests: No new attendees. No guests.

Secretary's Report: Meeting had a quorum. There was a correction to the minutes of 6 October 2020. On page 8 of the Legislative Briefing section, change to read "There have been 161 bills submitted so far and only one (#53) has veteran impact". The rest is correct. A motion to accept the October minutes with the 1 correction was made by Ray Goulet, 2nd by Andy Patterson. Unanimous. Motion carries.

Treasurer's Report: Kelly reported a balance of \$802.67. We did not spend any money since last month

Guest Speakers: None.

SUPPORTING AGENCY REPORTS:

Manchester VA Update: Kevin Forrest/Corey Beem - not present.

White River Junction VA Update: Dr. Brett Rusch - not present.

There will be a Mini-Mac next Wednesday from 10:00 AM until noon.

DMAVS Update: Shawn Buck

He reported that Amy has a new DMAVS website which is going live tomorrow. There will be a page for SVAC with information relevant to the committee. It will include

minutes to the meetings. Go to the "About us" tab and then to "Councils and Committees".

The Governor's Commission on Alcohol and Other Drugs approved a recommendation for the Military Task Force to fund an initiative that will be managed by the Division of Community Based Military programs to provide healthcare, agencies referring and treating substance abuse with education, support, and financial incentives. Ask the Question is within the policies and procedures.

Recognition Event: This will be held on December 9th to honor Veteran Friendly Businesses for 2020. Nineteen businesses will be honored.

Design Contest: A senior from Exeter High School and Seacoast School of Technology was chosen as the winner of a Design Contest. He will be recognized and the logo will be revealed.

Facebook Live Event: The Veterans Day ceremony at the NH State Veterans Cemetery will be tomorrow beginning at 10:50 am on the cemetery website. The cemetery is always open.

Dave Kenney added a comment that the Veterans Heritage Learning Center will be open on Veteran's Day from 10:00 am until 3:00 pm. Closing time is based on foot traffic.

Wreaths for Boscawen Event: The NHSVC will do wreaths this year at 10:30 am on December 5th. We are no longer associated with Wreaths Across America. There will be 6 separate stations around the cemetery. You will be asked to wear a mask and social distance. Pick up 2 wreaths and bows. Move to a gravesite and place wreath and bow. Then get back in line or depart cemetery. A wreath will be placed on every other headstone. There will be 3200 wreaths available. Donations will be accepted for the wreaths by the Blue Star Mothers. The cost is \$8 each. The cost with Wreaths Across America was \$15 each. The wreaths purchased locally are significantly cheaper. You can buy 2 for the price of 1. Your support is appreciated.

Barry Conway asked why the NHSVC is not associating with Wreaths Across America. Paul Lloyd responded that the NHSVC wants to support NH businesses and buy local. It costs less. The quality of the wreaths with Wreaths Across America is terrible. He said there is something fishy about Wreaths Across America. It is a non-profit run by a woman whose husband runs the company where they get the wreaths from.

NHVH Update: Peggy LeBrecque

She wished the Marine Corps a happy 245th birthday.

The census is at 140 veterans. There are 82 active applications - 8 are for Tarr Welch and 22 for Ledu Units.

She is waiting for COVID testing and surveillance for all staff. On November 5th, all staff testing results were negative.

There will be a virtual Veterans Day ceremony tomorrow and it will be on Facebook and You Tube.

She has some sad news to report. This morning there was a cluster of veterans with high fevers in the Life Enhancement Dementia Unit. Six veterans tested positive for COVID 19. These residents were isolated. The staff is trained on N95 masks and PPE. The NHVH is following Public Health guidelines. The community spread of COVID 19 in the Belknap area is increasing. All staff are wearing masks, gloves, and face shields. All admissions were put on pause per Public Health guidelines. Peggy is concerned about the affected residents. They are isolated to separate units. She is asking for your thoughts and prayers.

Andy Patterson had a comment. He said to Peggy that she and the staff are doing a great job protecting the veterans. He appreciates all she does for the residents.

Justin Troiano also commented that the NHVH is doing an incredible job. He asked whether the cluster of 6 were positives or showing symptoms. Peggy responded that the cluster of 6 were positive and living in a neighborhood with 11 residents. She is very concerned.

OLD BUSINESS:

Sweeney Post Activities: Bill Roy posted in the chat. The Manchester Veterans Council will be hosting veterans' services at Veterans Park at 1030. The French Counselor General from Boston will be laying a wreath honoring our veterans. Also, Sweeney Post will be open all day on Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day from 1100-1300. On Thanksgiving Day, the Sweeney Post will be hosting a breakfast from 0730-1000 and a turkey dinner at 1430. A meal will also be offered on Christmas Day. "Come on Down!" Tel. 603-623-9126.

Letters of Appointment: Paul Lloyd requested that all organizations submit Letters of Appointment for this fiscal year.

NEW BUSINESS:

Paul Lloyd received 2 calls. One call was from Jim Adams regarding the Pittsfield veteran who lost his house last week in a fire. Jim said thank you to both Janet and Bill Gaudreau for getting information out to the veteran community. The real need is for gas cards and fuel cards. A lot of support came from the community. The other call was from Janet regarding Mr. Morrell, the former Marine who lost his home. You can send gift cards to Janet for the veteran. Janet can be reached at 603-486-7805.

LEGISLATIVE BRIEFINGS: Kevin Grady - Legislative Chair

The initial 164 LSR's sat for about 1 month. Then 100 more LSR's were added in the past few days. There are 264 now. One was left from last session. It was attached to a bill that the governor vetoed. This one relates to Veterans on National Guard Force Protection bill. Things may ramp up after the elections.

Bill Roy had a question about the one bill. BG Mikolaities responded that this bill applies to Pease Air Guard and National Guard bases. Pease has the KC-46 worth 300 million. This bill aligns the policies to that of higher headquarters. Kevin added that It aligns the language in NH regulations to National language.

LEGISLATIVE ADVISORS:

Chris Scott (Senator Shaheen): oral and written report.

Chris echoed the sentiment to Peggy that she is doing a great job at the NHVH.

He discussed FY21 Senate Appropriations Bills on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs.

Bill Roy had a comment on the 161 million improvements to the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. The shipyard may be in line to get a Subcontract. This would be the first-time subs can be made from scratch. It would help the area. He urges the Congressional Representatives to support that.

Justin Troiano (Senator Hassan): oral report.

Note: There was a lot of static in the audio recording. Parts of it were not audible.

Justin wished a Happy Birthday to the Marine Corps.

He discussed Senator Hassan 's activities for October.

Oct 15th: Sen. Hassan urged the National Personnel Records Center to speed up processing so that veterans can get their benefits. The NPRC has been closed since March due to the pandemic.

Oct 19th: Sen. Hassan sponsored 3 bipartisan bills. One was on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention.

Oct 22nd: Sen. Hassan co-sponsored legislation to connect World War II and Women Veterans to VA healthcare.

Oct 30th: Sen. Hassan sponsored a bill to allow women to be issued better fitting uniforms at the US Military Academy at West Point. Women had to pay to fix their uniforms to fit better. Previously, only unisex uniforms were available for free.

Al Baldasaro had a question, do you know if Community Care is fully funded? Or does it need to be funded year to year? Justin responded that this is becoming an issue because there has been so much community care. They are looking at it year to year and plan to have a conversation with the VA Director.

Al Baldasaro also stated that NH does not have a fully funded VA Hospital. He wants to make sure it stays funded. We need all 4 Congressional Representatives to fight for the veterans.

Barry Conway commented that the VA used to go year to year for funding.

Justin said that his issue comes up in the appropriations bill every year.

Tom Giancola (Rep. Annie Kuster): oral report.

Tom has brief but important updates that they are excited about.

Oct 30th: The Congresswoman's bill on Protecting Business Opportunities for Veterans Act of 2019 was signed into law by President Trump. It is part of the Veterans First Program. She has been working on this for years. It ensures that money intended to go to veteran owned businesses goes to the intended place. This is a win for veteran entrepreneurs. It verifies that the business is doing the required percentage of work. It directs the VA to investigate. This bill fixes the loopholes that businesses were using. It gives the OIG tools they need to investigate suspected violators.

Oct 30th: Press Release calling for passage of the Presumptive Benefits for War Fighters Exposed to Burn Pits and Other Toxins Act of 2020. This removes the barriers to veterans suffering from exposure to toxic burn pits the veteran only needs to show proof of deployment. There are 34 countries named in the bill.

Congresswoman Kuster will be attending the Veterans Day ceremony at the NHSVC tomorrow.

Patrick Carroll (Rep. Chris Pappas): oral report.

HR 2898: Buddy Check Week - Wellness Checks for Veterans.

Community Provider Reimbursements: Rep. Pappas met with community providers regarding reimbursements. About 21 million was returned to NH hospitals. Millions of dollars were returned to providers. A provider on the Seacoast received about \$100,000

in reimbursements. There are issues with HealthNet, TriWest and Optum. Veterans are happy with community care. The backlog is reduced by millions of dollars.

Fellowship Program: Rep. Pappas wants to expand the program. The fellowship allows a VA employee to be embedded in a community hospital. There are 8 Fellowship Programs across the country. The hospitals enjoy the access and knowledge.

Service Academy Nominations: The service academy nominations were finished up this past week. Shawn Buck is on the nomination board.

Rep. Pappas was contacted by the CEO of TriWest regarding issues with ER payments for veterans. Let the office know if you received a bill that you should not have.

Veterans Affairs Committee Survey: Rep. Pappas has a survey available to complete on his Facebook page for veterans having issues with Compensation & Pension Exams.

Patrick offered the assistance of Rep. Pappas' office to the NHVH.

Al Baldasaro commented that Stella at the VA does a good job working on Community Care bills.

The VA is receptive to Rep. Pappas' concerns.

Dave Kenney commented on the Embedding Program in hospitals. This was put out as part of the Task Force. Manchester had a pilot program with Wentworth-Douglas Hospital. He also mentioned the Healthcare Branding in civilian hospitals with a dedicated area for VA care. It is a good idea to put a Claims Advisor in hospitals.

Patrick said that Catholic Medical Center was happy to have a VA employee help with the backlog of claims.

Jane Graham (Governor's Office): oral report.

Jane has a short update. The Governor will be at the NHSVC for the ceremony tomorrow.

The GoFor Money to veterans' organizations is re-opening. There is some money left. All CARES Act and Go For money must be spent by the end of the year. All organizations are eligible again, same process. Apply through Swim with A Mission (SWAM). Some of the money was only issued to 501c3's. It is now open to all charities.

Jane apologized for missing the October meeting.

The Governor went to a deployment ceremony for National Guard soldiers. They are in the process of welcoming some back.

Bill Roy asked why only 501c3's for the Go For funds with SWAM. He asked if 501c8's can apply. These are the Eagles, Elks, and Moose organizations which are veteran oriented. Can organizations apply for additional funds? Bill Roy received some funds for his 501c19 organization. Jane responded to apply if you have a need.

Al Baldasaro mentioned that Veterans Count which is a 501c3 received funds. Jane said that Veterans Count received 1.3 million and may be eligible for more. It is based on needs and losses. She encouraged all to apply.

Jane added that the Liberty House received 1 million. They had a major loss on their fundraising plan. They were unable to have their capital campaign to fundraise due to COVID.

Al Baldasaro asked Jane to thank the Governor on the Marine Corps Proclamation for its birthday.

Update on Spirit Award (Old Business): Diane Domenicus

She reported that they met at Hesky Park in Meredith last Thursday evening. The Spirit Award recipient, Al Haskell, was brought to the vigil. He was very surprised and happy. There were 24 people in attendance at the vigil to honor Al Haskell.

Bruce commented that Al was proudly showing his award.

Good of the Order:

Andy Patterson said that the DAV driving program is open on a limited basis. They are working on driver recertification. There is a new DAV Headquarters located on 212 Coolidge Avenue in Manchester. It has a Veterans Resource Cafe with computers so veterans can come in and work on their claims, resumes, and schoolwork. The grand opening is Saturday afternoon on December 5th.

Mike Lopez mentioned that the Vietnam Monument for Veterans Park was pushed back from Veterans Day to Memorial Day. The monument did not come in.

Peter Duffy said that the NH Selective Service has several vacancies for the fiscal year. There are 10 local boards across the state. There are 50 local board members in the state. The governor recommends candidates, and the President deploys them. Contact Peter if interested. Individuals sit and wait until there is a draft, activated when needed, and reclassified from the MEPS Board.

Bruce Garry mentioned that the Army National Museum in DC is opening tomorrow at 2:00 pm. It was delayed due to COVID. The ceremony is livestream only. Greg d'Arbonne added that the Army museum is based on what the Marine Corps did.

The new uniform is called the "Pinks and Greens."

Calendar of Events:

1st Wednesday- Monthly POW/MIA Vigil - 1900 at Veterans Park, Manchester, NH.

4th Tuesday - Monthly POW/MIA Vigil - 1900 at Langdon Park, Portsmouth, NH.

Every Thursday - Weekly POW/MIA Vigil - 1900 at Hesky Park, Meredith, NH.

Next meeting date: 01 December 2020

Adjourn Meeting: 1800

Respectfully Submitted,

Denise M DeBlois
Secretary

Note: Legislative reports from October and November that were electronically submitted are being sent separate from the minutes.

September 03, 2020

U.S. Senator Maggie Hassan joined New Hampshire veterans yesterday who participated in recreational therapy on a kayaking trip on the Lamprey River. The event was organized by Northeast Passage, an organization that works to empower people living with disabling conditions, both visible and invisible, to define, pursue and achieve whole life health, community engagement and fulfillment through the purposeful use of sports and recreation such as kayaking.

Senator Hassan is focused on supporting veterans in New Hampshire and across the country. The Senate recently passed the bipartisan *Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act*, which the Senator cosponsored, to improve veterans' access to mental health care, including expanding access to recreational therapy programs. Senator Hassan also called on the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to strengthen New Hampshire veterans' access to telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the Senator joined the rest of the New Hampshire Delegation in speaking out against a change in policy at the VA that limits veterans' ability to access non-drug related therapies, such as muscle massage services and acupuncture, which can help veterans experiencing chronic pain.

September 08, 2020

The American Legion and VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) added their support for bipartisan legislation introduced by U.S. Senators Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Susan Collins (R-ME), and Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ) to help ensure that Social Security, Veterans Affairs (VA), and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) beneficiaries automatically receive any future COVID-19 relief stimulus payments. The bill is also supported by DAV (Disabled American Veterans) and Paralyzed Veterans of America.

The bill addresses two separate issues to help ensure the seamless distribution of stimulus payments to Social Security, VA, and SSI beneficiaries.

First, it instructs the Treasury Department to quickly send the \$500 cash assistance per child to beneficiaries who have not received them. Initially, the Treasury Department said that these beneficiaries who missed the short Internal Revenue Service (IRS) deadlines earlier this year to receive their \$500 payments would have to wait until they file a tax return next year to receive them. Following the bill's introduction, and pressure from Senator Hassan and her colleagues, the IRS announced that it will re-open registration to allow individuals who have not gotten their \$500-per-child stimulus payment to enter their information on the IRS Non-Filer tool in order to receive their payment by mid-October of this year.

Second, as Congress debates the next COVID-19 relief package, this bipartisan bill would ensure that any future stimulus payments go out automatically to Social Security, VA, and SSI beneficiaries. Following bipartisan calls, the Treasury did eventually agree to send these

payments automatically during the first round of payments, and this bill ensures that any future payments would go out automatically without the confusion and uncertainty of the initial round of payments.

September 10, 2020

U.S. Senator Maggie Hassan (D-NH) cosponsored bipartisan legislation to help address the high rate of unemployment among veterans as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The bipartisan Veterans Economic Recovery Act of 2020 was introduced by Senators Jerry Moran (R-KS) and Jon Tester (D-MT).

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the veteran unemployment rate across the country has risen—from 3.1 percent in 2019 to 6.4 percent in August 2020. To help curb this increase in unemployment, the bipartisan Veterans Economic Recovery Act would create a rapid retraining program to provide unemployed veterans and reservists with 12 months of educational benefits to pursue training in high-demand occupations. It would also expand the Veteran Employment Through Technology Education Courses for Training Providers (VET TEC) program to help veterans and service members better transition to civilian life.

Education benefits made available through the rapid retraining program under the Veterans Economic Recovery Act of 2020 would be equivalent to benefits provided to veterans under the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Under this legislation, members of the National Guard or Reserve federally ordered to assist states with the COVID-19 response would also be eligible for the rapid retraining program.

September 11, 2020

United States Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), member of the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), Maggie Hassan (D-N.H.), and Ranking Member of SASC Jack Reed urged President Donald Trump to reverse the relocation of the POW/MIA Flag from atop the White House to an area not visible to the public. This decision by the White House appears inconsistent with the law the lawmakers passed last year to require the POW/MIA Flag be displayed whenever the American Flag is displayed on prominent federal properties to honor the more than 81,000 Americans who are listed as Prisoners of War (POW), Missing in Action (MIA), or otherwise unaccounted for from our nation's past wars and conflicts.

"It has come to our attention that this decision to abruptly move the POW/MIA Flag from atop the White House to an area that is apparently not visible to the public may violate federal law and does not appropriately honor the service and sacrifices of American prisoners of war, missing servicemembers, and their families," wrote the senators.

On November 7, 2019, President Trump signed into law a bipartisan bill authored by the senators requiring the POW/MIA Flag to be displayed whenever the U.S. Flag is displayed, effectively ensuring that both flags are displayed concurrently and every day at federal locations already designated under existing law, including the White House. The law states: "Display of the POW/MIA flag pursuant to this section shall be in a manner designed to ensure visibility to the public."

But in June of this year, the White House appears to have moved the POW/MIA Flag from the top of the White House, just under the American Flag, to a pole on the White House grounds. The senators urged President Trump and the White House to follow the letter and spirit of current U.S. law and display the POW/MIA Flag consistently and prominently in order to ensure that our country never forgets those service members who have not returned home.

Also on September 11, 2020

On the nineteenth anniversary of the September 11th terrorist attacks, U.S. Senator Joni Ernst (R-IA), a combat veteran, continues her bipartisan work to honor servicemembers, fallen soldiers, their families, and all those impacted by the Global War on Terrorism. Today, she introduced bipartisan legislation with Senator Maggie Hassan (D-NH) to authorize the construction of a Global War on Terrorism Memorial on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

"The Global War on Terrorism Memorial will honor the tremendous sacrifice made by service members, civilians, and their family members in service to our country," said Senator Hassan. "This bipartisan legislation would ensure that this memorial stands on the National Mall where countless visitors come every year to pay their respects and remember our country's history. I am proud to join Senator Ernst in helping to honor the thousands of Americans – including more than 75 Granite Staters – who have lost their lives in this ongoing conflict."

September 17, 2020

U.S. Senators Maggie Hassan (D-NH) and Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) joined Senator Jon Tester (D-MT) and colleagues in calling for answers from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) about a recent data breach that exposed veterans' Social Security numbers and other sensitive information and impacted VA community care providers across the country. The VA publicly announced the data breach earlier this week.

In addition, the Senators highlighted concerns over VA measures to protect other important data within its vast data systems and networks. They laid out a series of direct questions to ensure that the Department takes necessary steps to address vulnerabilities and protect the information of veterans and community providers in the future.

As a member of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, Senator Hassan has prioritized efforts to strengthen local, state, and federal cybersecurity. Senator Hassan's bipartisan Public-Private Cybersecurity Cooperation Act with Senator Rob Portman (R-OH) was included in a package of bills that were signed into law. In addition, the President signed into law the bipartisan Hassan-Portman Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Cyber Hunt and Incident Response Teams Act to help prevent cyberattacks at all levels of government and the private sector. Senator Hassan also joined in introducing the bipartisan Advancing Cybersecurity Continuing Diagnostics and Mitigation Act, which would update and improve federal agencies' cybersecurity, and make additional cyber defense resources available to state and local governments.

September 23, 2020

U.S. Senator Maggie Hassan (D-NH) joined U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), U.S. Senator Jon Tester (D-MT) – the Ranking Member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee – and a group of lawmakers on a letter to the Senate and House Armed Services Committees as they negotiate the final text of the fiscal year (FY) 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), urging the lawmakers to include a landmark Agent Orange exposure bill. The bill, which was included as an amendment to the Senate version of the annual defense legislation that overwhelmingly cleared the chamber in July, would require the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide benefits to veterans suffering from conditions related to their exposure to the dangerous pesticide Agent Orange.

Currently, 34,000 Vietnam veterans living with chronic health conditions developed as a result of their service are being denied critical benefits and health care from VA. These veterans have been subject to additional and unwarranted delays as a result of the Trump administration's repeated calls for further evaluation of scientific research—even though such research has already been reviewed by the National Academy of Medicine (NAM), which has established the standard for scientific evidence of association for more than twenty years. The amendment would require VA to provide a presumption of service-connection for Bladder Cancer, Hypothyroidism, and Parkinsonism—expanding care and benefits for veterans suffering from these three conditions.

September 25, 2020

U.S. Senator Maggie Hassan (D-NH) joined Senators Joni Ernst (R-IA), a combat veteran, and Doug Jones (D-AL) in introducing bipartisan legislation to help improve mental wellness for veterans. The Senators' bipartisan bill would designate one week per year as "Buddy Check Week" to organize outreach events and educate veterans on how to conduct peer wellness checks.

The bipartisan bill would designate one week per year as “Buddy Check Week” to organize outreach events and educate veterans on how to conduct peer wellness checks and recognize signs of suicide risk among fellow veterans. The bill is modeled after the American Legion’s “Buddy Check National Week of Calling” to connect veterans to better ensure that they receive the care they need.

Specifically, the bill directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA), in consultation with veterans, non-profits that serve veterans, mental health experts, and members of the Armed Forces, to develop and implement collaborative education opportunities for veterans to learn how to conduct wellness checks.

September 30, 2020

U.S. Senators Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Kevin Cramer (R-ND), and Bill Cassidy, MD (R-LA) introduced bipartisan legislation to strengthen and codify the Solid Start program, created by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) last year, to contact every veteran multiple times by phone in the first year after they leave active duty to check in and help connect them to VA programs and benefits.

The VA launched the Solid Start program in December 2019 with the goal of reaching out to all newly separated veterans three times within their first year of separation to check in and help connect them to VA programs and benefits, regardless of separation type or characterization of service. The program also prioritizes outreach to veterans who accessed mental health resources prior to separation in order to quickly connect at-risk veterans to services. The bipartisan bill would codify the program and authorize sufficient funding so that it can continue to serve veterans, and also makes improvements such as:

- Helping ensure that veterans can be reached by collecting up-to-date contacting information during the transition process
- Following up by mail or other outreach if a veteran does not respond to phone calls
- Including Solid Start information in VA printed materials and on the VA website
- Requiring the Government Accountability Office to assess the program to ensure that it is efficiently and effectively meeting the goals of the program

- Letter on Veterans Mental Health Legislation (Tester) - S.785 - Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2019
 - The letter was sent to Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy urging them to take up the Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act, which Senator Shaheen cosponsored and passed the Senate. The legislation contains comprehensive reforms to improve the provision of mental health services for veterans.
 - NOTE: This has since passed the House and has been sent to the President.

SEPTEMBER 04, 2020

Shaheen Participates in Nashua Groundbreaking Ceremony for Habitat for Humanity Project Supporting NH Veterans

(Washington, DC) – U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) delivered remarks and participated in a groundbreaking ceremony with the Greater Nashua Habitat for Humanity on a new project this afternoon. The project – the Roger Hall Memorial Build – will support Granite State veterans and was made in possible, in part, by a \$400,000 grant from the City of Nashua through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) HOME Investment Partnerships Program. The project is also sponsored by Anheuser-Busch and other local businesses. The building will house two veteran families and is dedicated to Roger Hall, a core build member of the Greater Nashua Habitat for Humanity, who passed away two years ago.

“At the core of Habitat for Humanity’s mission is the understanding that affordable housing creates the conditions necessary for people to lift themselves up and find economic stability when they need it most. During a time when our state and nation faces serious shortages in affordable housing, the work that the Greater Nashua Habitat for Humanity does is more important than ever before,” said Shaheen. “These new homes will help New Hampshire veterans, service members and their families by providing them the financial security they urgently need. Everyone deserves the dignity and hope that accompanies a stable home and no one deserves that opportunity more than our veterans and military families.”

Senator Shaheen is a dedicated advocate for New Hampshire’s veterans and has worked diligently to combat veteran homelessness. She recently worked with a bipartisan group of Senators to introduce legislation that would give the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) greater flexibility in caring for and meeting the needs of homeless veterans in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Shaheen has also fought to secure millions of federal dollars to assist the state’s homeless population, and continues to call for additional funding in future COVID-19 relief to support those who are experiencing – or are at risk of experiencing –

homelessness. In June, Shaheen introduced two additional pieces of legislation to bolster care for veterans amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

SEPTEMBER 09, 2020

Shaheen, Bipartisan Group of Senators Call on VA Secretary Wilkie to Provide Coverage for Telehealth Services for Veterans' Families During the Pandemic

(Washington, DC) – U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) joined a bipartisan group of Senators to call on Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Robert Wilkie to provide coverage of comprehensive telehealth services, including voice communication, for beneficiaries of the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA).

Currently, federal regulations do not allow CHAMPVA to cover health care services that are delivered through audio-only conferencing, telephone calls and text messaging.

“Our constituents, including those who reside in rural areas where internet access may be limited, need access to telehealth services that involve voice communication, especially during a public health emergency,” wrote the Senators in their letter. “We appreciate the steps VA has taken in recent years to make telehealth more accessible to veterans and their families, but in order for this access to be meaningful, it must reach constituents through the platforms that work best for them and their providers. As such, we urge VA to take the necessary steps to immediately ensure CHAMPVA beneficiaries are able to access health services through voice communication platforms.”

The letter was led by Senator Baldwin (D-WI) and also signed by Senators Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Jon Tester (D-MT), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Angus King (I-ME), Tina Smith (D-MN), Jack Reed (D-RI), Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ), Michael Rounds (R-SD), Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN).

Telephone-based telehealth is vital for New Hampshire's rural communities that do not have reliable broadband services to facilitate video telehealth. Earlier this year, the Defense Health Agency announced that it would expand TRICARE coverage for telehealth services following Shaheen's bipartisan efforts with Senator Martha McSally (R-AZ). In April, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' heeded Shaheen's bipartisan call and updated guidelines to bring Medicare reimbursement for telephone-based health services in line with Medicare reimbursement for video telehealth.

Senator Shaheen has fought tirelessly in support of veterans and their families to ensure they have the resources and services they need during the COVID-19 crisis. Senator Shaheen

previously called on VA Secretary Wilkie to strengthen New Hampshire veterans' access to telehealth as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act that Senator Shaheen helped negotiate and worked to pass into law included \$2.15 billion in funding to the VA to enhance its ability to provide telehealth services to veterans. In May, Shaheen introduced legislation to assist health care providers delivering telehealth services and ensure patients can continue to access health care from the safety of their homes. Shaheen also participated in bipartisan calls for a permanent expansion of telehealth services that Congress included in the CARES Act. The bipartisan legislation included a provision to expand access to telehealth services for Medicare beneficiaries in New Hampshire and across the country during the COVID-19 pandemic.

SEPTEMBER 17, 2020

Shaheen & Hassan Call for Answers on Department of Veterans Affairs Data Breach Affecting Veterans and Health Care Providers

Senators: "It is imperative VA take aggressive and decisive action to address this current incident and lay out a strategy to prevent such problems from arising in the future"

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Maggie Hassan (D-NH) joined Senator Jon Tester (D-MT) and colleagues in calling for answers from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) about a recent data breach that exposed veterans' Social Security numbers and other sensitive information and impacted VA community care providers across the country. The VA publicly announced the data breach earlier this week.

"We write today to express our serious concerns with the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) continued inability to protect the personal data of veterans and those medical providers in the community who partner with VA to provide veterans timely access to health care. Veterans who rely on VA for health care and providers who do business with VA need assurance that the Department is capable of safeguarding their personal and financial data. Anything less is completely unacceptable," the Senators wrote.

The Senators continued, "The information provided to Congress on this incident raises countless questions and does not instill confidence that VA is adequately addressing the current incident or working to better safeguard private information in the future."

In addition, the Senators highlighted concerns over VA measures to protect other important data within its vast data systems and networks. They laid out a series of direct questions to ensure that the Department takes necessary steps to address vulnerabilities and protect the information of veterans and community providers in the future.

As a member of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, Senator Hassan has prioritized efforts to strengthen local, state, and federal cybersecurity. Senator Hassan's bipartisan Public-Private Cybersecurity Cooperation Act with Senator Rob Portman (R-OH) was included in a package of bills that were signed into law. In addition, the President signed into law the bipartisan Hassan-Portman Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Cyber Hunt and Incident Response Teams Act to help prevent cyberattacks at all levels of government and the private sector. Senator Hassan also joined in introducing the bipartisan Advancing Cybersecurity Continuing Diagnostics and Mitigation Act, which would update and improve federal agencies' cybersecurity, and make additional cyber defense resources available to state and local governments.

SEPTEMBER 23, 2020

Shaheen & Hassan Join Senate Call to Ensure Landmark Agent Orange Exposure Bill is Included in Final Annual Defense Legislation

(Washington, DC) – U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), a senior member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and U.S. Senator Maggie Hassan (D-NH) joined U.S. Senator Jon Tester (D-MT) – the Ranking Member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee – and a group of lawmakers on a letter to the Senate and House Armed Services Committees as they negotiate the final text of the fiscal year (FY) 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), urging the lawmakers to include a landmark Agent Orange exposure bill. The bill, which was included as an amendment to the Senate version of the annual defense legislation that overwhelmingly cleared the chamber in July, would require the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide benefits to veterans suffering from conditions related to their exposure to the dangerous pesticide Agent Orange.

The Senators wrote, "It is time for Congress to acknowledge the overwhelming scientific evidence put forth by veterans, scientists and medical experts, and to end the wait for more than 34,000 frustrated and desperate veterans living with and dying from these health conditions. Inclusion of this legislation in the conference agreement for the Fiscal Year 2021 NDAA would be consistent with scientific and historic precedent, and is simply the right thing to do for these veterans and their families."

Currently, 34,000 Vietnam veterans living with chronic health conditions developed as a result of their service are being denied critical benefits and health care from VA. These veterans have been subject to additional and unwarranted delays as a result of the Trump administration's repeated calls for further evaluation of scientific research—even though such research has already been reviewed by the National Academy of Medicine (NAM), which has established the standard for scientific evidence of association for more than twenty years. The amendment

would require VA to provide a presumption of service-connection for Bladder Cancer, Hypothyroidism, and Parkinsonism—expanding care and benefits for veterans suffering from these three conditions.

Shaheen and Hassan cosponsored Senator Tester’s standalone legislation, the Fair Care for Vietnam Veterans Act of 2020 , which was introduced in March and supported the amendment including this legislation to the NDAA that cleared the Senate in July.

Senator Shaheen and Hassan have worked tirelessly to advocate on behalf of Granite State veterans. Shaheen and Hassan were cosponsors of the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act, which was signed into law last June and will create a permanent legislative fix to help ensure “Blue Water” Navy veterans get the disability and health care benefits they deserve as a result of exposure to Agent Orange during the Vietnam War. In December 2019, Shaheen sent a letter to VA Secretary Robert Wilkie requesting that the Department explain its delay in addressing the backlog of payment claims to health care providers in the community. The final version of the FY2020 NDAA signed into law the same month included a provision Shaheen and Hassan fought for that eliminates the military “widow’s tax” that prevents as many as 65,000 surviving military spouses nationwide from receiving their full Department of Defense (DOD) and VA survivor benefits. Last November, Shaheen introduced legislation, the Acupuncture for our Heroes Act, to expand access to acupuncturist services for veterans enrolled in the VA health care system and provide an alternative to opioids for veterans suffering from chronic pain.

In 2018, Senator Shaheen worked to include a provision in the VA MISSION Act – which was signed into law – ensuring every veteran in New Hampshire has access to care in the community. This was a top priority for Shaheen as New Hampshire does not have a full-service VA medical facility. Under the previous VA community care program, Senator Shaheen introduced the Veterans Choice Card Prompt Payment Act to expedite payment to providers who serve veterans.

SEPTEMBER 28, 2020

As Expiration of VA’s COVID-19 Debt Collection Moratorium Approaches, Shaheen Calls on Secretary Wilkie to Protect Veterans & Inform Them of Repayment Options

SHAHEEN: “The federal government must continue to work in every way possible to mitigate the impact of this pandemic on those who have selflessly served our nation.”

(Washington, DC) – As the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) moratorium on debt collection ends soon, U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) called on the agency this week to make every attempt to notify veterans of when it will resume collection of medical debt and inform them of their repayment options and financial hardship assistance available. The expiration of the VA’s

COVID-19 debt collection moratorium is set to expire on December 31st, 2020. This has led to concerns that Granite State veterans could be unexpectedly saddled with exorbitant debt obligations when the VA restarts collections.

“I am concerned that veterans who are unaware of their ability to continue making payments will face insurmountable bills when the VA begins collecting deferred payments in 2021... The VA must ensure that those veterans who are eligible for this assistance are aware of these options during the pandemic and when payments on outstanding debt resume,” wrote Shaheen.

Shaheen continued, “My office has heard from Granite Staters who were unaware of these debt collection changes until they failed to receive an expected copayment bill and were forced to inquire about payment options at the Manchester Veterans Affairs Medical Center. Prompt notification of these changes to veterans through electronic communication, mail or telephone would help to reduce uncertainty and allow veterans to choose their preferred repayment method. It would also make it less likely that veterans are unexpectedly saddled with exorbitant debt obligations when the VA restarts collections.”

She concluded her letter by urging the VA to work in every possible way to mitigate the impact of the pandemic for veterans.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Senator Shaheen has fought to provide financial relief to veterans and their families. In April, Shaheen and a group of Senators called on the Trump Administration to issue stimulus checks automatically to recipients of benefits through the Department of Veterans Affairs or the Supplemental Security Income program. This followed successful efforts to push the U.S. Treasury Department to automatically send Social Security recipients direct cash assistance included in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act without having to file tax returns.

Shaheen has also worked to ensure veterans and their families have the services and resources they need amid this crisis. Earlier this month, Shaheen joined a bipartisan group of Senators to call on VA Secretary Wilkie to provide coverage of comprehensive telehealth services, including voice communication, for beneficiaries of the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA). She previously called on Wilkie to strengthen New Hampshire veterans’ access to telehealth as the COVID-19 pandemic spread. The CARES Act that Senator Shaheen helped negotiate and worked to pass into law included \$2.15 billion in funding to the VA to enhance its ability to provide telehealth services to veterans. In May, Shaheen introduced legislation to assist health care providers delivering telehealth services and ensure patients can continue to access health care from the safety of their homes. Shaheen also participated in bipartisan calls for a permanent expansion of telehealth services that Congress included in the CARES Act. The bipartisan legislation included a provision to expand access to

telehealth services for Medicare beneficiaries in New Hampshire and across the country during the COVID-19 pandemic.

SEPTEMBER 25, 2020

**Senators Shaheen, Young Introduce Bipartisan Bill to Combat Bias in Military Promotions
S.4765**

(Washington, DC) – U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), a senior member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and U.S. Senator Todd Young (R-IN) introduced the bipartisan Combatting Bias in Military Promotions Act. Their legislation would require the Department of Defense (DoD) to eliminate certain identifying information from being presented to military officer promotion boards that may result in a biased promotion decision.

“Providing service members with every opportunity to succeed and rise through their ranks in service to their country is a national security priority to ensure we have the best and brightest at the helm,” said Senator Shaheen. “I’m glad to partner with Senator Young on this bipartisan effort to reform how military promotions are determined by rooting out any criteria that could be used to discriminate against eligible officers. As our nation faces new and evolving threats to our national defense, it’s imperative that we empower and invest in our most talented, experienced and qualified officers across all branches.”

“As a Marine, I understand that removing bias and prejudice from the force is critical to help strengthen the cohesiveness of units and enable our military to accomplish complex missions around the globe. By removing information such as race and gender from promotion materials, we can ensure that promotion boards would assess and evaluate officers based purely on their merits and accomplishments. While I am encouraged that some of these actions are being considered by the Department of Defense, protecting the integrity of our promotion process must be codified to ensure that all biases, whether conscious or unconscious, are not able to influence the military’s promotion decisions,” said Senator Young.

Specifically, the bill would prohibit the inclusion of information in a promotion board packet that indicates the name, gender, age, race, or a photograph of the officer. Instead, that information would be replaced by a unique identifier which would enable the Department to use a number, such as a unique military service number or their Social Security Number, to identify the individual eligible for promotion.

Secretary of Defense Mark Esper recently announced that he would be taking action against discrimination, prejudice, and bias across the DoD, including eliminating photographs from consideration by promotion boards and selection processes. The Combatting Bias in Military

Promotions Act would codify this DoD action and expand it to eliminate additional information from the packet that may result in a biased promotion.

- September 30 Senator Shaheen signed on as a co-sponsor to **S.4166 - Ensuring Survivors Benefits during COVID-19 Act of 2020** (Sinema-Tillis)
 - Currently, classifying a veterans' death as due to COVID-19 without taking into account existing service-related disabilities can disqualify surviving families from receiving Dependency and Indemnity Compensation and education benefits. This bill would require the VA to get a medical opinion to determine if a service-connected disability was the principal or contributory cause of death in situations where a veteran with a service-connected disability dies from COVID-19.

Rep. Pappas DC Action for Vets – September

Bills that Passed the House

- **H.R. 5245 SHIELD for Veterans Act**
 - Passed the House by voice vote on September 23, 2020
 - Would prevent VA from collecting on any debt that originated as a result of an error on the part of VA
- **H.R. 6590 Deferring action on VA originated debts for the duration of the COVID-19 emergency period**
 - Passed the House as part of the updated HEROES Act on October 1, 2020
- **H.R. 6591 Expanding access to emergency care in the community during the COVID-19 emergency period**
 - Passed the House as part of the updated HEROES Act on October 1, 2020

Sponsored Bills

- None

Sponsored Letters

- None

Co-Sponsored Bills

- **H.Res. 1152 Recognizing the 100th Anniversary of Disabled American Veterans (DAV)**
- **H.R. 7443 Veterans Claim Transparency Act of 2020** – Provides the representative of record of a claimant for compensation or benefits administered by the Secretary an opportunity to review a proposed determination regarding that claim.
- **H.R. 7879 VA Telehealth Expansion Act** – Requires VA to award grants to entities for the expansion of telehealth capabilities and provision of telehealth services to veterans through the VA and the Veterans Community Care Program. VA must give preference to entities that represent veterans in rural or highly rural areas or entities that operate in a medically underserved community.
- **H.R. 8483 Making certain modifications to the educational assistance programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs in light of the COVID-19 emergency** – Provides updates to Student Veteran Coronavirus Response Act of 2020, codifying protections for students in apprenticeships and ensuring retention of GI Bill benefits.

Co-Signed Letters

- To Secretary Wilkie to request additional information about disciplinary actions recommended by the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection (OAWP) and actions taken by the Department in response.

- To NDAA Conferees asking them to support Vietnam Veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange

Meetings

- Phone call with Dave McIntyre, CEO of TriWest, on Monday, September 14, 2020 at 2:00 PM, to discuss ongoing issues with legacy claims payments
- Video meeting with NH Representatives of Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) on Tuesday, September 22, 2020 at 10:30 AM, to discuss current legislative priorities

Committee

- **House Veterans Affairs Full Committee Legislative Hearing**
 - Thursday, September 10th at 10:00 AM
 - Committee considered 31 pieces of legislation relating to the prevention of veteran suicide
 - Chris did not have any bills considered, nor did he ask any questions
- **House Veterans Affairs Economic Opportunity and Technology Modernization Subcommittees Joint Hearing “Moving Beyond Patchwork Systems: The Future of Education Services IT”**
 - Wednesday, September 16, 2020 at 10:00 AM
 - Chris did not ask any questions
- **House Veterans Affairs Oversight and Investigation Subcommittee Hearing on “Modernizing VA’s Medical Supply Chain: Lessons Learned from the Pandemic”**
 - Wednesday, September 16, 2020 at 2:00 PM
 - Chris asked about what VA is doing to speed up the modernization of their supply chains, what key steps or goal posts the committee can keep an eye out for to measure progress, what challenges VA faces, how Congress can assist with getting other agencies to better work and coordinate with VA, and for a description of the impact of efforts by private citizens to gather supplies for VA hospitals
- **House Veterans Affairs Full Committee Legislative Markup**
 - Thursday, September 17th at 9:00 AM
 - Chris did not ask any questions

As part of the FY21 Senate Appropriations Bill, Senator Shaheen's priorities have been included as follows:

Military Construction

The legislation includes Senator Shaheen's request for \$160 million for the PNSY Multi-Mission Dry Dock. This project will fund the construction of a partitioned extension to Dry Dock #1 with the superflood basin area as part of the Navy's Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Plan. The extension will consist of two new bays, significantly increasing dry dock capacity for additional Virginia class submarines. Without additional docking bays of adequate length and depth, the projected workload at PNSY will culminate in approximately 20 deferred Virginia class availabilities through 2040.

Veterans Affairs

Report on VA Community Care Provider Backlog

Senator Shaheen successfully included a provision in the legislation directing the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide Congress with a report on the VA's plan to fully eliminate the backlog in community care provider claims. The report will include the number of outstanding claims nationally and within each Veterans Integrated Service Network, the date by which the VA determines it will eliminate the backlog, additional resources the VA needs to eliminate the backlog and a plan to ensure that future backlogs are prevented or addressed within a reasonable time.

VA Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program – Higher than FY20 Levels

The legislation includes Senator Shaheen's request for \$21.5 million to fund the VA Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program.

Women Veterans Health Care – Higher than FY20 Levels

The legislation includes Senator Shaheen's request for \$626 million for gender-specific health care services, which is \$41 million higher than FY20.

Supportive Services for Veterans and Families Program – Higher than FY20 Levels

The legislation includes \$420 million for the Supportive Services for Veterans Families program. The program is designed to improve residential stability, increase skills, and income potential as well as promote self-determination among veterans.

Community Care

In FY20, the Committee provided \$17.1 billion for Medical Community Care. This bill provides an additional \$3.8 billion for Medical Community Care designated as emergency funding.

Opioid Treatment Funding – Higher than FY20 Levels

The legislation includes \$503.6 million for opioid prevention and treatment, which is \$101.6 million greater than the amount provided in FY20. The bill specifies that \$120 million of that funding is to be used to continue implementation of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act. The additional funding is to be used for prevention and treatment programs.

VA Construction

The legislation provides \$1.31 billion for major construction and \$390 million for minor construction.

Adaptive Sports Grants – Consistent with FY20

The bill includes \$16 million for Adaptive Sports grants, consistent with Senator Shaheen's request. The legislation also includes report language that Senator Shaheen requested recognizing the important role that Adaptive Sports Grants play in providing alternative therapy for veterans.

Radio Frequency Report Language

The legislation contains report language that Senator Shaheen requested urging the VA to study and conduct research into whether there is a connection between rates of brain damage and cancer and the potential Radio Frequency exposure during a veteran's service.

Medical and Prosthetic Research – Consistent with FY20 Levels

The bill includes \$800 million for medical and prosthetic research, which is consistent with Senator Shaheen's request.

Veteran Suicide Prevention Outreach – Higher than FY20 levels

The bill includes \$313 million for suicide prevention outreach at the VA, which is \$91 million higher than FY20 funding levels and consistent with Senator Shaheen's request.

PFAS Report

The legislation includes language that Senator Shaheen requested urging the VA to establish and maintain a registry for veterans who may have been exposed to PFAS due to exposure to AFFF during their military service and develop a public information campaign to inform eligible veterans about the registry.

Alternative Treatments

Senator Shaheen successfully included language in the legislation encouraging the VA to expand the use of alternative treatments to pain management, such as acupuncture, in its delivery of health care services.