

Biographical Statement

John “Dutch” DeGroot

Nominee: Second Vice President

Organization: [Insert Organization Name]

Status: Delegate

John “Dutch” DeGroot is a dedicated advocate for veterans and a committed leader within the Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County (VACCC). His service to veterans is grounded in a practical understanding of organizational governance, accountability, and the importance of strong communication between leadership, staff, and member organizations.

Dutch has been actively involved in strengthening VACCC operations through a focus on transparency, process improvement, and member engagement. He believes the VACCC’s greatest strength lies in its diverse membership and its ability to work collaboratively to meet the evolving needs of veterans across Cook County. His approach emphasizes respect for the Commission’s statutory mission while ensuring it remains responsive, professional, and forward-looking.

Throughout his involvement with the VACCC, Dutch has consistently supported efforts to improve internal communications, enhance public-facing materials, and clarify the Commission’s role to both member organizations and the veterans it serves. He understands that clear communication—internally and externally—is essential for maintaining credibility, encouraging participation, and sustaining long-term growth.

Dutch also recognizes that the future success of the VACCC depends on thoughtful planning. This includes addressing staffing needs, supporting professional development, and ensuring budgetary decisions are made with long-term sustainability in mind. He supports responsible hiring practices that strengthen service delivery while respecting fiscal constraints and statutory requirements.

As a candidate for Second Vice President, Dutch is committed to supporting the President and Vice Presidents in maintaining a strong, active, and engaged membership. He believes leadership should encourage participation, value diverse perspectives, and foster an environment where member organizations clearly understand both the capabilities and limitations of the VACCC.

Dutch’s goal is simple: to help ensure the VACCC remains one of the strongest and most effective Veterans Assistance Commissions in the state—respected by its members, trusted by veterans, and prepared for future challenges.

Goals and Vision for the VACCC (2026 and Beyond)

If elected Second Vice President, John “Dutch” DeGroot will focus on:

- Active Membership Growth & Engagement

Strengthening participation by encouraging consistent attendance, clearer expectations, and better communication with member organizations.

- Enhanced Communication

Improving internal and external communications so members, partners, and veterans better understand VACCC services, initiatives, and capabilities.

- Support for Staffing & Hiring Needs

Advocating for responsible hiring and staff support to ensure veterans receive timely, professional assistance while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

- Budget Awareness & Long-Term Planning

Supporting transparent budgeting practices that balance current service demands with long-term sustainability and future development.

- Strong Governance & Collaboration

Working collaboratively with Board members, staff, and delegates to uphold the VACCC's mission while continuously improving how the Commission operates.

Frank Gutierrez: Candidate for President

American Legion Post 758

I am submitting my name for consideration as President of the Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County (VACCC) because I believe in the mission and in its responsibility to deliver measurable, accountable outcomes for the Veterans and families we serve.

I am a United States military Veteran, an active-duty Marine, Marine for life, and a retired Army Reservist, with a 23-year military career. My service includes five combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, totaling a little over five years boots on the ground. During my military service, I spent many years supporting the development and stabilization of foreign governmental institutions. In retirement, I apply those same skills, policy understanding, coalition building, and institutional accountability, to strengthening our own systems in service of the Veteran community.

In my civilian career, I have focused extensively on Veteran workforce development, economic opportunity, and organizational leadership. I founded the Veteran Employee Resource Group (VERG) at the Chicago Transit Authority to improve veteran hiring, retention, and engagement. Through sustained advocacy and coordination with recruiting efforts, Veteran hiring at the Chicago Transit Authority nearly quadrupled, helping establish the organization as a recognized leader in Veteran employment and engagement.

I joined the VACCC in December of 2021, and I am proud of the progress the organization has made since that time. Through disciplined governance, advocacy, and collaboration with county partners, the Commission's operating budget has grown from \$471,000 to \$3.2 million in 2026, allowing for expanded services and increased capacity to support Veterans and their families across Cook County.

I currently serve as President of the VACCC Executive Board, where we have been directly involved in budget oversight, policy development, service delivery strategy, and intergovernmental coordination. In this role, I have emphasized transparency, documentation, and alignment with the actual needs of the veteran population we serve.

In addition, I am the Founder and President of the Veterans Chamber of Commerce, a nonprofit organization dedicated to veteran workforce development, entrepreneurship, and procurement access. In this capacity, I sit on multiple diversity and supplier inclusion task forces for local government entities, working to ensure that Veteran-Owned Businesses (VOB's) are included in public procurement opportunities and that policy commitments translate into real economic access.

I am also committed to motivating the next generation of war fighters before they ever raise their right hand. Through initiatives such as the CPS JROTC and Blue Angels event I helped to plan, sponsor, and execute. I helped bring students, many of whom would not otherwise have access, into contact with our nation's military professionals. These experiences allowed young people to step inside aircraft, engage with military aviators, and learn about service academies and military career pathways. This work was later recognized through an Emmy Award-winning documentary, "In-Formation", underscoring the importance of early exposure, inspiration, and opportunity.

Jesus "Chuy" Segura

Candidate for First Vice President

Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County

Board Member-at-Large | Accredited Veterans Service Officer and Community Outreach Liaison

Jesus "Chuy" Segura is an Army veteran, veterans advocate, and community leader seeking election as First Vice President of the Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County. He currently serves as a Board Member-at-Large for the Commission and as Leyden Township's Accredited Veterans Service Officer and Community Outreach Liaison, helping veterans and their families access compensation, pension, survivor benefits, and supportive services.

Chuy proudly served 8 years in the United States Army, including assignments with the 16th and 17th Psychological Operations Battalions, the 2nd Infantry Division, and the 82nd Airborne Division, with service in Iraq and South Korea. Before his current veterans advocacy role, he served as a Dean of Students, where he developed a reputation for leadership, problem-solving, and service to others.

He also serves as Trustee and Board Secretary for the Elmwood Park Library Board and as Chair of the Board Governance, Policy, and Personnel Committee. In addition, he is a proud member of VFW Post 5979 and American Legion Post 335. Chuy is committed to collaborative leadership, accountability, and strong advocacy for veterans throughout Cook County.



Contact

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Leadership Highlights

- Board Member-at-Large, Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County
- Accredited Veterans Service Officer and Community Outreach Liaison, Leyden Township
- Trustee and Board Secretary, Elmwood Park Library Board
- Chair, Board Governance, Policy, and Personnel Committee
- U.S. Army veteran with service in Iraq and South Korea
- Member, VFW Post 5979 and American Legion Post 335

Committed to service, accountability, and results for veterans and their families.

Biography - Robert Arciola

Nominee: Treasurer

Vaughan Chapter PVA Delegate (1990-1993), (2021-Current)

On the surface, Robert Arciola is an accomplished leader with over 36 years of experience in non-profit leading. Robert remains steadfast ensuring the viability of various organizations, programs, and events long-term.

He is efficient in his roles that he's been considered as the "go-to-person." Robert has the ability to take unhealthy organizations and programs, or events, and transform them to become healthy and professionally functioning. His skills have produced productive, long-lasting results for veterans.

He caters to all levels of government, non-profit organizations, hospitals, legislators, and businesses. He works well with senior corporate executives, boards, program managers, supervisors, committees, and is effective in consultations.

More than his role as a leader, he is also effective at persuading and influencing individuals. His opinions are highly valued; people trust and respect his judgments. Robert earned a degree in Management and Leadership in 2002. Through his course, he developed an interest to bring his additional skills back to Vaughan Chapter PVA.

In particular, he focused on helping the chapter as vice president, then executive director, to get off monitoring status to become thriving and vibrant, win multiple awards from PVA, the Illinois Attorney General, and receive the largest donation in the chapter's history. Helping as vice president and winning PVA awards was not new to him, as Vaughan Chapter had accomplished it in the early 1990's.

Here, he managed to work together with the public, members, staff, chapter leaders, PVA National liaison, to assess needs, plan, organize, lead and direct to use the resources available. Robert also contributed to the development, enforcement, and adhesion of policy, reports, budgeting, and comptroller functions. In May 2024, he was awarded the Cliff Crase Award for Professionalism by the PVA at its Convention.

Robert has been Vaughan Chapter PVA delegate to the VACCC in the early 1990's and once again since 2021. Robert was voted as the VACCC Vice President serving briefly until the President resigned whereby he then led as President through its toughest transition period. His recommendation led to the direct hire of the current VACCC Superintendent and subsequent work involved to save and make the organization thriving and vibrant. He's also served as a member on the Bylaw (current Chair) and Finance Committees. Robert serves as current Treasurer and is finishing his 2nd consecutive term. He's also the Bylaw chairman and has served on the past finance committee. If re-elected,

Robert will continue to lead and serve the VACCC as it moves forward providing sound decision-making, advice, and assistance to support our staff in serving the veterans and family members throughout Cook County.