

SERVING THE VETERANS OF COOK COUNTY ILLINOIS

President Frank Gutierrez
Superintendent Elizabeth D. Soto

Volume 1—April 2024



Veterans show up in force to support their VACCC

26 March was another historic day for the Veterans of Cook County. At the quarterly meeting of the Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County (VACCC), 41 delegates and alternates attended. They represented 32 different eligible veteran organizations. Many guests were also in attendance. Our Superintendent, Elizabeth Soto, gave a detailed report of the expansion of services and workload. The staff of 3 made a herculean effort to serve an estimated 200,000 veterans and their families. Our main concern is to expand this overextended staff in the short term. Other reports were given and nominations and elections held. The new executive board and appointees are named on the **last page**.

Our upcoming meeting Tuesday, 25 June @19hr00 will be very special and we urge all of our veterans community to attend with our delegates and officers. It will be held at Hines VA building 9 (the Auditorium). Before beginning our business meeting, we will have a short presentation by the **Illinois Attorney General's Military and Veterans Rights Bureau**. The MVRB is the only office of its kind in the country and is staffed by veterans.

It is dedicated to ensuring that veterans and active duty military service members receive the benefits they have earned. The bureau provides men and women with

assistance; including case advocacy, health outreach, and public advocacy forums. For more information on the services this office provides, please see www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/Rights-of-the-People/military-and-veterans-rights/ or call the MVRB Helpline **1-800-382-3000**.

Also, Hines VA outreach personnel will provide resource tables with staff to answer questions you may have. In addition, all of our Cook County Commissioners and other key legislators will be invited and welcomed to see how vibrant our community is.

There will be updates and the final agenda sent via email. If you want to be added to the email list, contact us, vaccookcounty@gmail.com

To register for 25 June event
<https://signupschedule.com/dutch>



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www.facebook.com/VACofCookCounty

Presidents Message



Over the past few years, the Veteran Assistance Commission of Cook County (VACCC) has undergone significant changes that have allowed us to better unify, organize, and expand our impact. Our membership has doubled and the budget increased 400% during this period. This growth enables us

to better serve the Veterans who protected our nation. Looking ahead, our focus this year will be on staffing our office, developing a website, and moving to a more appropriate location to aid veterans in need.

I am confident we can achieve these goals given our track record of overcoming challenges. With just 3 staff members, we are assisting record numbers of veterans facing financial hardship. This is only possible due to the strong leadership of Superintendent Elizabeth Soto and the tireless work of Peter Bencak and Vanessa Meadows.

I believe this is just the beginning. As we continue to grow and expand our services, we will improve the lives of countless local Veterans struggling to make ends meet. For many, we provide more than just assistance - we are an organization that saves lives by easing the financial distress that contributes to Veteran suicide.

For the remainder of this fiscal year, I challenge each of our member organizations to educate your communities about our services and recruit fellow veterans groups to join our mission of supporting those who served our country. Together, we can increase our impact.

Vice Presidents Message



Thank you to the Cook County Board of Commissioners for collaborating with the Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County (VACCC) in establishing a budget for this fiscal year. The VACCC has been breaking records in servicing more veterans within Cook County. We are approaching six months since the budget was passed

and there is much to do. It is amazing what concerned veterans can do to come together with the aid of the VACCC Superintendent, Elizabeth Soto, and her staff to move forward to service the veterans. Superintendent Elizabeth Soto has been meeting with the HR staff so that the VACCC can hire more employees for the VACCC. We have quarterly membership meetings to bring the veteran organizations up to date on the progress that has taken place and to discuss what still needs to be conducted to service more veterans.

I want to offer congratulations to the Veteran Assistance Commission of Cook County (VACCC) board, with the leadership of the executive committee and members who have come to the various VACCC membership meetings to ask questions and ask what can be done to get more

help for the three staff members in the office of the VACCC. As seen in the VACCC reports, what they have carried out with three members; imagine what will happen when we can double our staff and start moving our staff around to various locations throughout Cook County.

The aim is to have veteran service officers available who will be able to service veterans with their benefits assistance, spread our wings to be in various parts of Cook County to meet face to face with veterans, and be able to expand more individual services to veterans. Our next quarterly membership meeting is 25 June 25.

2nd Vice Presidents Message



The success of the VACCC in the last couple of years has been for lack of better words... **pronominal!** Those that have witnessed the transition and have been long time members, thank you for holding down the fort until the reinforcements arrived. The reinforcements are you the members that have resurrected the Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook

County. Our past Commander (*before we rectified the bylaws to mirror the independant government agency we represent*) Kevin Barszcz, and our immediate Past President Robert Aricola, we can't thank you enough for carrying the load. There are others as well that have been in the trenches.

Membership..... we hear it all the time at our organizations meetings until our head spins. With the VACCC membership means something totally different, it comes with great responsibility. The Commander/President chooses someone to represent their organization which means you are responsible for the success of the VACCC, which in turn is there to service approximately 200,000 veterans plus their families.

Our membership has been outstanding to the point I don't believe there have been greater numbers to show up for a VAC meeting in the entire state. Your educated on the matters of the VACCC and take them back to your meetings. Also knowing that by not attending a meeting it hurts our mandated quorum.

We have a long road ahead of us and many items need to be remedied with the county in the lack of employees, communication we have presently. That our tiny staff with Elizabeth, Peter & Vanessa performing miracle we need to keep educating others that the veterans of Cook County our nations heroes are **THE PRIORITY** and only a vibrant VACCC is the solution.

To end all I can say is thank you to all of you that take your advocate roll seriously. We can't do this mission without every one of you.

See our meetings on YouTube

We also stream meetings on FaceBook

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdMzBs1ujTLWzf6rS-D7dMg>

Veterans Legislative Day Springfield

Illinois Senator Mike Porfirio Vice chairman Veterans Senate Committee stands with his fellow veterans representing the VFW, American Legion AMVETS, MOAA A true champion of veterans the Senator is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and still serves in the Navy Reserve.



A group of about 45 veterans, took a “road trip” to Springfield on 13 March 2024 to meet with several legislators and advise them in person of our concerns about several bills that are currently pending in the Illinois Senate and the Illinois House of Representative. The trip was the brainchild of and organized by Department Quartermaster/Adjutant, Joe Bartley, with the assistance of Commander Brett Nila and Legislative Committee Chair, Dutch DeGroot. From all parts of the State our veterans arrived and began their day with a breakfast meeting at Springfield’s VFW Lafore Lock Post 755.

Comrade Bartley opened the meeting by distributing a worksheet prepared by the Legislative Committee that contained a description and summary of the House and Senate bills that, if passed will impact Illinois vets. The bills of greatest concern were discussed in detail. Our vets were organized into three groups and assigned to meet with certain Representatives and Senators at pre-arranged meeting times. Those legislators included Sen. Michael Hastings and Sen. Mike Porfirio, the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee and several other members of the Veterans Affairs Committee. In the House, our comrades were scheduled to meet with Rep. Lance Yednock, Chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee and Vice Chairman, Mark Walker, plus many other members of that committee. Several other influential Senators and Representative also were on the contact list. All of these legislators are especially important because their positions on the bills we are most concerned about will have dramatic effect on whether they are approved the committees. Such approval is required before any bill

can be voted on by the full House or Senate.

Our veterans focused their discussions on two very important bills. The first, SB3479, is an “Anti-Claim Shark” amendment to the Illinois Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Practices Act that requires all business that purport to be able to assist veterans with VA claims must make certain disclosures about their fees and imposes very serious economic penalties for violations. This bill was approved by the Senate Committee, in large part due to a very effective Witness Slip campaign orchestrated by DeGroot. On 9 April 2024, it passed the full House by an astonishing 55-0 vote! The second is a group of related bills in the Senate and House that will provide veterans with service-connected disabilities substantial relief from property taxes on their homes. These bill have not yet been assigned to their respective committees but it is anticipated that will happen soon.

In the late afternoon most of our group assembled on the floor of the Illinois Senate for a group photo with Senator Porfirio. They then adjourned to a local tavern for some oral after action reports. Everyone involved with the trip, especially Comrades Bartley and DeGroot thought their efforts was very effective and were most pleased with the reception by the legislators. They felt that Illinois veterans definitely have “friends in Springfield”! Especially remembered was a comment by Sen. Michael Hastings who said that this was the first time he had ever been visited by an organized group of Illinois veterans to express their positions on pending legislation. Upon leaving his office many of the group were thinking, *“but it won’t be the last.”*

Pact Act Facts

Under the PACT Act Expansion, Veterans can qualify for healthcare now if there was a toxic exposure risk activity (TERA) while serving. This is regardless of if they served overseas or stateside only, if the exposure was during active duty, active-duty training, or inactive duty training. If the Veteran was exposed during active-duty training only, they will not qualify under TERA currently.

A toxic exposure risk activity can include:

- Air pollutants (burn pits, sand, dust, particulates, oil well fires, sulfur fires)
- Chemicals (pesticides, herbicides, depleted uranium with embedded shrapnel, contaminated water)
- Occupational hazards (asbestos, industrial solvents, lead, paints including chemical agent resistant coating, firefighting foams)
- Radiation (nuclear weapons handling, maintenance and detonation, radioactive material, calibration and measurement sources, X-rays, radiation from military occupational exposure)
- Warfare agents (nerve agents, chemical and biological weapons); and more.

If the Veteran believes they were involved in a toxic exposure risk activity, then the VA can locate the exposure type in the service record of the Veteran. Additional documents may be needed to support the TERA if not found in the service record, but the Health Eligibility Center will request the documentation.

Veterans who performed active service while assigned to a duty station in (including airspace above) certain locations during specific periods of time: On or after August 2, 1990, in the following countries: Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, or the United Arab Emirates. On or after September 11, 2001, in the following countries: Afghanistan, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Uzbekistan, or any other country determined relevant by VA can immediately qualify for care. (Note: VA has not determined any other country relevant at this time.)

Veterans who deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Freedom's Sentinel, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn, Operation Inherent Resolve, or Resolute Support Mission also qualify under the expansion for VA care.

Minimum eligibility requirements must still be met to qualify for healthcare.

With the expansion on the PACT Act benefits, several Veterans may qualify for immediate care under TERA, or the added locations of service and Operations instead of having to file for a service-connected rating or waiting to be phased in based on separation from service.

For more information on Veteran Healthcare Eligibility and Enrollment, please reach out to Hinesoutreach@va.gov (Submitted Sara Gavin Hines Outreach Team)

Landmark decisions effecting Chicago Veterans



The Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs celebrated a historic milestone last week with the passage of the Veterans Hiring Preference by the Chicago City Council. Sponsored by Alderman Villegas, Chair of the Council's Veteran Caucus and a former U.S. Marine, this significant amendment extends a hiring preference to veterans across all city departments, encompassing all job categories within Chicago. This ensures that veterans receive priority consideration during the selection process.

The amendment, which required months of collaborative effort between the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs, the Department of HR, the Law Department, Alderman Villegas' team, and other stakeholders, includes updates such as expanding the definition of a veteran to encompass National Guard members and reservists, thereby broadening the scope of those eligible for the hiring preference.

I am proud of the many achievements this administration and the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs has already accomplished in less than a year. From providing access to affordable housing, improving access to earned benefits, creating pathways to employment opportunities, or expanding opportunities for veteran-owned businesses, our efforts will have a lasting effect on our veterans and their families for years to come.

To read the full bills go to our website

<https://vfwildist4.org/di/vfw/v2/default.asp?pid=105182>

(Submitted Kevin Barszcz Director of the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs)



Our Upcoming VACCC Meeting 25 June 2024 Don't miss it!

Our next meeting shall be at Hines VA in their auditorium located in building 9 starts @ 19hr00 please arrive early as the meeting shall start promptly. We shall have a special presentation by the Illinois Attorney Generals Military & Veterans Rights Bureau. The MVRB is dedicated to ensuring that veterans and active duty military service members receive the benefits they have earned. We welcome all interested guest for this educative event. After the presentation we shall have the normal VACCC membership meeting. We are also inviting the Cook County Commissioners so they can see how our veterans community is engaged.

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

At the direction of the President

This means that all Veterans who served in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Global War on Terror, or any other combat zone after 9/11 will be eligible to enroll directly in VA health care without first applying for VA benefits. Additionally, Veterans who never deployed but were exposed to toxins or hazards while training or on active duty in the United States will also be eligible to enroll.

As directed by President Biden, this expansion of VA health care eliminates the phased-in approach called for by the PACT Act — meaning that millions of Veterans are becoming eligible for VA health care up to eight years earlier than written into law. This is a critical step forward because Veterans who are enrolled in VA health care are proven to have better health outcomes than non-enrolled Veterans, and VA hospitals have dramatically outperformed non-VA hospitals in overall quality ratings and patient satisfaction ratings. Additionally, VA health care is often more affordable than non-VA health care for Veterans. VA encourages all eligible Veterans to visit [VA.gov/PACT](https://www.va.gov/PACT) or call 1-800-MYVA411 to learn more and apply for VA health care beginning March 5. Since President Biden signed the PACT Act into law on August 10, 2022, more than 500,000 Veterans have enrolled in VA health care. “If you’re a Veteran who may have been exposed to toxins or hazards while serving our country, at home or abroad, we want you to come to us for the health care you deserve,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “VA is proven to be the best, most affordable health care in America for Veterans – and once

you’re in, you have access for life. So don’t wait, enroll starting March 5th.” Beginning March 5, we’re making millions of Veterans eligible for VA health care years earlier than called for by the PACT Act,” said VA Under Secretary for Health Shereef Elnahal, M.D. “With this expansion, VA can care for all Veterans who served in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Global War on Terror, or any other combat zone after 9/11. We can also care for Veterans who never deployed but were exposed to toxins or hazards while training or on active duty here at home – by working with chemicals, pesticides, lead, asbestos, certain paints, nuclear weapons, x-rays, and more. We want to bring all of these Veterans to VA for the care they’ve earned and deserve.” In addition to expanding access to VA care, this decision makes it quicker and easier for millions of Veterans to enroll. Many Veterans believe they must apply to receive VA disability compensation benefits to become eligible for VA health care, but this is not correct. With this expansion and other authorities, millions of eligible Veterans can enroll directly in VA care – without

VA is expanding health care eligibility to millions of Veterans

any need to first apply for VA benefits. This expansion of care covers Vietnam Veterans, Gulf War Veterans, Iraq War Veterans, Afghanistan War Veterans, Veterans who deployed in support of contingency operations for the Global War on Terror (Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Freedom’s Sentinel, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn, Operation Inherent Resolve, and Resolute Support Mission), and more. This expansion also covers many Veterans who never deployed as a part of a conflict but were exposed to toxins or hazards while serving in the U.S. Specifically, under this expansion of care, any Veteran who participated in a toxic exposure risk activity (TERA) — at home or abroad – is eligible for VA health care. VA has determined that Veterans who were exposed to one or more of the following hazards or conditions during active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training participated in a TERA: air pollutants (burn pits, sand, dust, particulates, oil well fires, sulfur fires); chemicals (pesticides, herbicides, depleted uranium with embedded shrapnel, contaminated water); occupational hazards (asbestos, industrial solvents, lead, paints including chemical agent resistant coating, firefighting foams); radiation (nuclear weapons handling, maintenance and detonation, radioactive material, calibration and measurement sources, X-rays, radiation from military occupational exposure); warfare agents (nerve agents, chemical and biological weapons); and more. VA will use all available information to determine if Veterans participated in a TERA, including military records and service connection. VA is executing a nationwide campaign to ensure that as many Veterans as possible enroll. To date, VA’s PACT Act outreach campaign has included more than 2,500 events nationwide, \$13 million in paid advertising, 88,000 earned media clips, more than 400 million emails and letters to Veterans, VA’s first-ever text messaging campaign, the creation of a one-stop-shop PACT Act website, and more. This is the largest outreach campaign in VA history, which has one goal in mind: ensure that all Veterans —and their survivors — get the health care and benefits they deserve under the PACT Act.

For more information about how the PACT Act is helping Veterans and their survivors, visit VA’s PACT Act Dashboard. To apply for care or benefits today, visit [VA.gov/PACT](https://www.va.gov/PACT) or call 1-800-MYVA411. More information on eligibility can be found at [VA.gov/PACT](https://www.va.gov/PACT).

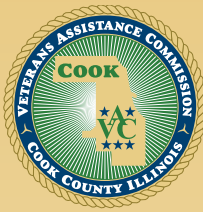
Media contacts

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February 26, 2024



Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County

Membership Meeting Minutes

Location **26 March 2024**
Lyons Township
6404 Joliet Road
Countryside, IL 60525

To be voted on 25 June Meeting

(Executive Board Members): Robert Arciola (*President*) Frank Gutierrez (*1st Vice President*), Paul Knudtson (*2nd Vice President*)(*absent*), Michael Chyterbok (*Treasurer*) (*absent*), William Browne, Wayne Kern, John Steciw (*EB members*)

I. Welcome – President Arciola

- a. Call to Order at 1902 hrs.
- b. Roll Call/Establish Quorum - Frank Gutierrez announced that 32 members were present per the Sign In Sheet. A quorum was confirmed as 18 members were required. The Sign In Sheet will be attached (to final minutes) to and made a part of the Official Version of these Minutes.
- c. Jim Parker of Am Vets Post 66 was appointed as Secretary for the meeting.
- d. Recognition of Guests – President Arciola introduced and welcomed Rochelle Crump of NWWU and State Senator Mike Porfirio

II. Opening Reflection - Chaplain Kevin Ake

- a. Prayer/Reflection
- b. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Consent Agenda – President Arciola

A motion to approve the minutes of the 26 December 2024 meeting, as amended change the date of the minutes by Bill Starr was seconded and approved by unanimous voice vote.

IV. Public IV Public Comments for Items Not public IV Comments for Items not on the Agenda.

- a. Rochelle Crump of the NWWU Said that she thinks the procedures for becoming a State Chartered organization are unfair to the NWWU.
- b. Ken McClory of AL Post 615 ask Ms. Crump, “what’s your point?” President Arciola responded that such a question is not appropriate as a Public Comment but explained that the procedures for becoming a State Chartered organization are clearly set forth in the applicable State law.
- c. Lorenzo Fiorentino of AL Post 335 said that it is his understanding that any AL, VFW, AMVETS, DAV or similar organization is free to chose to join or not join the VACCC at their discretion.
- d. Paul Bezazian of VFW Post 8322 announced that tomorrow at 10am there will be a rally to protest the recent flag burning. at City Hall and he would like for veterans to attend in support.
- e. Eden Puente announced that the Chicago Golf Association is offering a \$10 membership discount to veterans. He said the organization offers a number of programs that would be of interest to golfers.

V. GOVERNANCE REPORT — Treasurer Michael Chyterbok

- a. Approval of Financial Reports . No report due to the absence of the Treasurer.

VI. VACCC Office Reports - Superintendent Elizabeth Soto.

- a. Review of Financial and Disbursement Report.
- b. Review of Veterans Served Race & Gender Report.
- c. Monthly Outreach Report.
- d. Communications/ Website Updates Report.
- e. Update on Cook County HR & Hiring Staff Delays
- f. Highlights of 2023, including budget meetings attended by veterans that resulted in our largest budget to date -- \$2,000,000 and the selection of Miller, Hall & Triggs as our legal counsel.
- g. Goals for 2024, including the hiring of new staff, the closing of the office on Wednesdays so staff can catch up with paperwork backlog, and the Mural Reveal and Mini Resource Fair scheduled for 5 May 2024 Several questions were asked to which Elizabeth gave satisfactory responses. Dutch DeGroot moved for approval of the Superintendent’s Report which was seconded and approved by unanimous voice vote.

VII. Committee Budget - Chairman Bill Brown announced there was no report as the 2024 budget was approved. President Arciola said we will need a new committee and chairman for future budgets.

VIII. Committee On Bylaws - Chairman John Steciw read the following proposed change to Section 5.6: F. The President may change the date of a regularly scheduled Quarterly Membership Meetings when necessary, provided that prior notice is given and requirements of the Illinois Open Meetings Act are met. This will be presented for approval at the next meeting.

IX. Committee on Services Provided – President Arciola said that Paul Knudtson has resigned as Chairman and a replacement is needed. Wayne Kern, a Committee member said that with the conclusion of the last report there may not be much for a new committee to do, but he will agree to volunteer as needed. Dutch DeGroot asked for Consensus approval for Wayne to be a Consultant as needed. This was approved.

X. Committee on Legal Assistance Search - William Browne See Superintendent’s report, Item f.

XI. Future Meeting Site Committee – Dutch DeGroot The Chairman reported that he is working on a centralized location for the next meeting.

XII. Old Business – President Arciola

- a. Highlights of VACCC for 2023 and Goals for 2024 -- See Superintendent’s report, Items f. and g.
- b. Report on Section 501 c. (4) findings –Tabled by Consensus.

XIII. New Business – President Arciola

a. President Arciola announced that motions to elect Officers and Directors were in order. Pursuant to a series of proper motions, duly seconded, the following were nominated and elected to the Offices indicated by unanimous voice vote:

-- Please see back page

XIV. Comments and Announcements VACCC Questions/Concerns from Membership.

- a. Dutch DeGroot requested and received Consensus approval for the VACCC to pay expenses related Superintendent Soto’s membership in the national organization of VACCC superintendents.
- b. Dutch DeGroot requested and received Consensus approval to invite a representative of the Illinois Attorney General’s Military and Veterans Rights Bureau to attend the next meeting to explain its mission and how it helps veterans.
- c. Bill Szura thanked Lyons Township for the use of its facilities for this meeting.
- d. The next membership meeting will be held on Tuesday, 25 June at 1900 hrs. at a location TBA.

XV. Adjournment Bill Starr made a motion to adjourn that was seconded and approved by a unanimous voice vote at 2013hrs.

Superintendent Soto's Message



The **Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County (VACCC)** has launched into the new fiscal year with resounding success. The infusion of both seasoned and fresh leadership onto the VACCC Executive Board has been nothing short of exemplary. Furthermore, the VACCC office continues

to demonstrate outstanding dedication in assisting Veterans from every corner of the county.

In the inaugural quarter alone, we proudly supported **611** veterans, providing a total of **\$117,953.30** in direct financial aid, marking a remarkable **58%** increase from services provided in FY23. As we set our sights on the second quarter and beyond, our aim is to amplify this impact even further.

It's imperative to highlight that the VACCC's effectiveness hinges on the collaborative efforts of our

dedicated Office Staff, Executive Board, Commission Members, the Cook County Commissioners Veterans Committee, our many committed partners and the entire Veteran community. Together, we form a formidable force dedicated to serving those who have served our nation.

Looking ahead, I am excited about the opportunities that the remainder of the year holds. In addition to our ongoing efforts, the VACCC will be introducing new benefits, including the launch of a Hygiene Card tailored specifically for our Veterans. This card will empower our Veterans and their families to purchase and gain access to much-needed hygiene products they may require.

Furthermore, we anticipate rolling out several other enhancements to our services in the coming months.

As we march forward, let us continue to unite in our mission to honor and support our Cook County Veterans. With your continued dedication and support, I am confident that we will achieve even greater milestones in the months to come.

VACCC has Support of Local Artist & Community



Last 5 April was a banner day for the Veterans of Cook County Illinois. A beautiful, three-panel, mural was created for the Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County and dedicated before a large crowd.

In attendance were many of our legislative partners, State Senator Mike Porfirio, Cook County Veterans Committee Chairwoman Commissioner Donna Miller, Commissioners Frank J. Aguilar, Alma Anaya, Tara S. Stamps along with many Officers and Members/Delegates of the VACCC as well as many of our veteran colleagues and advocates.

Our Super Superintendent Elizabeth Soto, elegant as always, was Master of Ceremonies and, after some introductory remarks, introduced the speakers. First up were Muralist and Assistant Al Cantarella and Z. Vickery who thanked Elizabeth and the VACCC for the opportunity to salute American veterans and Home

Depot and PPG Paints (whose representatives also were in attendance) for donating the services and supplies that made their work possible. Commissioner Donna Miller thanked our local veterans and the VACCC for providing so many of the services they need. The other Commissioners also spoke briefly and for the most part echoed the comments of Committee Chair Miller. VACCC President, Frank Gutierrez and 2nd VP, Dutch DeGroot, pointed out the importance of the recently enacted Illinois Military Assistance Act and the funding guarantees it provides. The VACCC's goal is to secure that funding to meet the challenges of serving 200,000 veterans who reside in Cook County. The concluded with a final thank you to Superintendent Soto and her staff, Vanessa Meadows & Peter Bencak,. It's certainly all our hope that more staff comes to help them with the work load.

Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County Office Staff

Superintendent Elizabeth D. Soto
Director of Finance Peter Bencak
Executive Assistant Venessa Meadows



Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County Elected & Appointed Officers

Voting Members

President Frank Gutierrez
Vice President William Browne
2nd Vice President Dutch DeGroot
Treasurer Robert Arciola
At Large Board Gregory Jacobs
At Large Board Wayne Kern
At Large Board John Steciw

Non Voting Appointed Members

Secretary Jim Parker
Chaplain Kevin Ake
Judge Advocate Gina A. LoGalbo
Sargent at Arms Lorenzo Fiorentino

Visit our Temporary Website vfwildist4.org
(go to resource tab)

Illinois Attorney Generals Military & Veterans Rights Bureau



**Military and Veterans Rights
Helpline at 1-800-382-3000 or
by email at MVRB@ilag.gov**

Veterans Administration Contact Number



VA's main info line 1-800-MyVA411
(800-698-2411) is never the wrong
number The number to call when you
don't know who to call.

Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County Member Organizations

American Legion Post 36
American Legion Post 104
American Legion Post 183
American Legion Post 208
American Legion Post 216
American Legion Post 335
American Legion Post 525
American Legion Post 541
American Legion Post 615
American Legion Post 758
American Legion Post 806
American Legion Post 943
American Legion Post 973
American Legion Post 974
American Legion Post 1941
American Legion Post 1983
AMVETS Post 66
AMVETS Post 268
Jewish War Veterans Post 710
Marine Corps League Detachment 553
MOAA Chicago Chapter
Navy League Post 69
PVA Vaughan Chapter
Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 311
Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 981
Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1337
Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 2202
Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 2868
Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 3579
Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5979
Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7186
Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 8322
Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 9284
Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 10778
VVA Chapter 242



*** Per the Military Veterans Assistance Act eligible organizations can apply for VACCC membership 1 January until midnight of the last day of February. The organization must be Federally or State chartered and their Commander/President select One Primary & One Alternate Delegate. Attendance at quarterly VACCC meetings is strongly stressed.**

VETERANS ASSISTANCE COMMISSION OF COOK COUNTY®

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