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Chicago Memorial Day and the Pride Parades Are Back!!



Gov. Pritzker, State Rep. Harris, U.S. Rep. Quigley - IL Getting To Zero



JOIN US!!



Help Us Carry the Big U.S. Flag!



Memorial Day 2022

Monday, May 30, was the official designated date established this year to honor those who died while serving in the U.S. military. It was originally called Decoration Day, and created during the American Civil War in 1868 when citizens would place flowers on the graves of those who had been killed in battle. By 1890, every Northern state had adopted it as a holiday. It was transformed by the immense number of casualties in the two World Wars, and in 1971 Congress designated it as a day of remembrance.

Relatedly, following the Second Battle of Ypres in 1915, Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, a physician with the Canadian Expeditionary Force, wrote the poem "In Flanders Fields." Its opening lines refer to the fields of poppies that grew among the soldiers' graves in Flanders (Belgium). Inspired by the poem, YWCA worker Moina Michael attended a YWCA Overseas War Secretaries' conference, a training workshop for staff, in 1918 and wore a silk poppy on her coat and distributed poppies to others to honor those lost in battle. By 1920, the National American Legion adopted it as its official symbol of remembrance. Remembrance poppies are now evident in display in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and other countries to commemorate those killed.

Chicago Memorial Day

Events in Chicago honoring those killed in conflict resumes this year. The Wreath Laying Ceremony takes place at the Eternal Flame on Daley Plaza at 11am followed by the Parade down State Street from Lake Street to Van Buren Street at Noon. The parade is one of the largest and oldest Memorial Day parades in the nation, dating back to 1870. (The oldest Memorial Day Parade is Wilmington's, which celebrates its 155th this year!)

Chicago Pride Parade

The *Chicago Pride Parade* is scheduled for **Sunday, June 26**, and the Chicago Chapter of the American Veterans for Equal Rights will again be marching in the parade. Mayor **Lori Lightfoot** and First Lady **Amy Eshleman** will be leading the parade, probably joined by Governor **JB Pritzker** and his wife Mary. We expect to be at the front of the parade with them. Joining us will be staff from the Jesse Brown and Hines VA and the Lakeside Band.

We need at least fifty people to help us march in the parade this year and are asking for volunteers to march with us. We need a couple of people to carry the AVER banner at the front, someone to drive the car with the banner on top, 10 people to carry the service flags, and 40 people to carry the large 50' U.S. flag. If you've ever wanted to march in the parade, this is your chance!! Since we are at the front of the parade, you can watch the rest of the parade at the end in Lincoln Park. The Mayor is also hosting a special post-parade celebration at the end of the parade route, and you're invited! **SO PLEASE JOIN US!!**

Please contact the newsletter editor, avernewsletter@gmail.com, if you are interested in marching with us!!

Honoring Our Own

On Saturday, April 30, at the Lone Star Flight Museum, **Eric Alva** and **Danny Ingram** were honored as the *Combined Arms LGBTQ Champions*. The Champion Award is given to individuals who have made distinguished contributions to advancing the LGBTQ+ veteran community through advocacy, programming, leadership, or policy. Eric and Danny are distinguished AVER veterans!! Congratulations Eric and Danny!!

Monthly AVER Meetings for the Chicago Chapter Start up!

We now meet up every month on *First Thursdays* at 7pm (Chicago, Central time zone) at the **Center on Halsted**. **Everyone** is welcome to attend our monthly Board meetings *in-person* or via Zoom!! For Zoom, *check the averchicago.org website for the active link (click on the highlighted "Zoom" link near the bottom of the webpage) to get into the Zoom meeting. To join via audio: call 312-626-6799 with ID 488-863-384 and passcode 328090.*

AVER Chicago Chapter Hits the Streets in 2022

2022 is a great year!! We look forward to marching again in the *Chicago Memorial Day Parade* with the *Lakeside Band* and others in May. In addition, we will be marching again in the Chicago Pride Parade. [*Please help by joining us to carry our AVER banner and flags. You don't have to be a veteran or servicemember to join!*](#)

Trans Detainees at Border

In early May, U.S. Congressman **Mike Quigley**, a member of the House Appropriations Committee, questioned Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Commissioner **Chris Magnus** about what policies and procedures are in place to ensure the safety and protections of trans individuals in their custody. Quigley had previously raised concerns involving the mistreatment of trans detainees at the border and led thirty House Democrats in calling for an end to the detention of individuals living with HIV and transgender people. His questions came during a hearing held by the Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security concerning the department's fiscal year 2023 budget request. A video of the exchange, recorded via YouTube, can be viewed at the following weblink: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JSIURxyi60g>. Kudos to him for recognizing and addressing the particular needs of the members of this LGBTQ+ community.

Pritzker, Quigley, and Harris Support IL "Getting to Zero"

In late May, Governor **JB Pritzker** and State Representative **Greg Harris** (13th District) announced the "Getting to Zero" initiative to end the HIV epidemic by 2030. U.S. Representative **Mike Quigley** (5th District) joined other Congressional representatives who support this plan. "I'm proud to represent a state that is committed to providing increased HIV prevention and access to care," said Congressman Quigley. He's also pushed for greater federal support of housing for people living with HIV since they generally face "incredible stigma and discrimination." Through partnerships with people living with HIV, community-based organizations, healthcare providers, government agencies, and others, the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Illinois Department of Public Health, and Chicago Department of Public Health are coordinating this project. The goals are to see **zero** new HIV transmissions and **zero** people living with HIV who are not seeking healthcare options. For more information, see <https://gtzillinois.hiv/> and <https://www.aidschicago.org/page/our-work/advocacy/district-factsheets>.

Al Treb

Alfred J. Treb, 96, passed away on May 11, 2022. He lived in Chicago and generously donated incredible desserts and main course dishes for AVER fundraising events over decades. He was a proud U.S. Navy veteran also known for his singing and rug making! He was preceded in death by his sisters Margaret and Priscilla and his brothers, Larry and Richard, and is survived by many nieces and nephews. He was a charming man and will be missed.

Soldiers Facing Discrimination

An article by **Steve Baynon**, **Military.com**, notes that the U.S. Army is considering a modification to policy that would specify that soldiers can request to move if they feel state or local laws discriminate against them based on gender, sex, religion, race, or pregnancy. The guidance, which would update a vague service policy to add specific language on discrimination, is under consideration but would be one of the most progressive policies in effect amid the growing number of conservative-leaning states. The policy would ostensibly sanction soldiers to declare that certain states are too racist, too homophobic, too sexist, or otherwise discriminatory to be able to live and serve there safely and comfortably. If finalized, the new rules would clarify under what situations a soldier could request a "compassionate reassignment." At present, the rules are vague and are generally only invoked when there are unresolved family problems. The Army's consideration of a policy to protect soldiers from discriminatory laws is part of a wider DOD campaign to shield servicemembers from divisive state laws.

Air Force Concerned About LGBTQ Personnel

Related to the last story, the U.S. Air Force informed its servicemembers that it will support their families with medical and legal help, and other resources, like relocation, if they were affected by conservative state laws restricting LGBTQ rights. The new policy was announced as an expansion of human rights protections for these military families as states have enacted laws that ban gender-affirming healthcare for minors, restrict teaching about sexual orientation and gender identity in public school, and prohibit trans athletes from participating in sports. The *Exceptional Family Member Program*, which offers resources to families with “special needs,” allows personnel to be reassigned to different states with safer environments for their families, has been active for decades. However, in the current political climate, the policy has been expanded to include a new category. Ironically, the policy was principally applied with active-duty soldiers who felt threatened in other countries; now the policy is being applied to those individuals serving in conservative states in our own country!!



Challenges to LGBTQ+ Servicemembers in 2022

A new report from the *Center for American Progress* estimates that the 79,000 LGBT individuals who currently serve in the military and roughly 1M LGBT veterans face higher levels of economic security, housing instability, and mental health concerns than non-LGBT individuals. LGBT active-duty servicemembers are nearly four times more likely than non-LGBT active-duty servicemembers to report that they often didn't have enough to eat, and twice as likely to report that it was difficult to pay for their household expenses. One-in-four LGBTQ active-duty servicemembers is regularly behind on rent payments. In addition, LGBT active-duty servicemembers are nine times more likely to be depressed, and two-in-five LGBTQ active-duty servicemembers need counseling but do not receive it. Some of this is being addressed by the VA but could be alleviated by passage of the *Equality Act*, currently blocked by the Republicans in the Senate. Urge Congress to pass the *Equality Act*!!

Please help us reduce publication costs!

A **digital** version of *VetPride* is also now available. If you wish to receive a **PDF file of the newsletter by email**, instead of a printed copy by U.S. postal mail, **please send an email message to avernewsletter@gmail.com**. Thanks! You get less postal mail and it *helps to reduce our newsletter printing and postage costs*.

= Chicago Chapter =

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