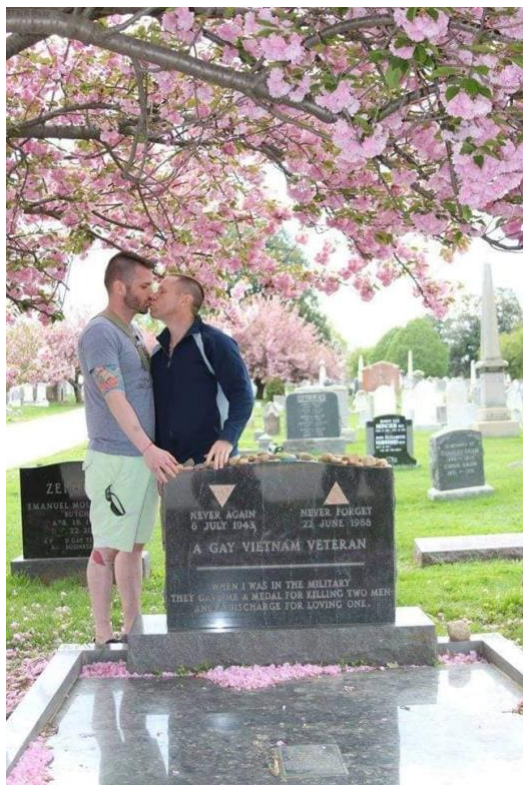


♥♥♥ **AVER Valentine's Day Issue** ♥♥♥



Love Is Still In The Air

You may recall hearing about Steven Snyder-Hill. In 2011, at the Republican Party Presidential Debate in Orlando, there was a question posted to candidate Rick Santorum by Steve who was then serving in Iraq. He asked whether the candidates' presidencies would "circumvent the progress that's been made for gay and lesbian soldiers in the military." By posing the question, he publicly came out two days after the repeal of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. He was booed by the audience, and Santorum stated he would reinstate the ban. Earlier that year, Steve, a Captain in the U.S. Army Reserve, married Joshua Snyder in the Congressional Cemetery at the grave site of their personal hero Leonard Matlovich whose gravestone reads "When I was in the military they gave me a medal for killing two men and a discharge for loving one." Steve and Joshua were plaintiffs in a lawsuit filed by the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network challenging the Defense of Marriage Act and other federal statutes that prevented the military from providing equal protections and support to same-sex marriage. Steve chronicled much of this in his book "Soldier of Change: From the Closet to the Forefront of the Gay Rights Movement." He was a speaker at our annual Veterans Day dinner a few years ago. Happy 12th!!

Another First

Army Reserve Officer Tammy Smith was promoted to the position of Brigadier General on August 10, 2012, the first gay general to serve openly in the U.S. military. She retired as a Major General in 2021, having served as Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of the Army. She was married to Tracey Hepner on March 31, 2012 in a ceremony at the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C. Hepner was an officer in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and was announced as a personal guest of First Lady Michelle Obama for the 2013 State of the Union Address. They remain active by continuing their long-standing support of military families.



Remembering the U.S. Army's First Gay Active-Duty Marriage at West Point

It was January 2018, and two U.S. Army Captains who met during the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” era became the first active-duty couple to get married at West Point Military Academy. Captains Daniel Hall, 30, and Vinny Franchino, 26, exchanged vows at the chapel; they were Apache helicopter pilots. They met in August 2009 during Ring Weekend, a tradition when the plebes are allowed to retaliate against the firsties, when Hall was a senior and Franchino was a freshman. They became close as partners in a mentoring program that allowed seniors to offer instruction to freshmen who were following similar career paths; they remained silent and never shared with anyone else that they were gay. They remained in contact with each other and had their first date in 2012, after the repeal of the DADT ban. Hall was in flight school at Fort Rucker in Alabama, and was deployed to South Korea with his Boeing AH-64 Apache attack helicopter, and Franchino was deployed in Germany and several other countries in Eastern Europe. They grew accustomed to being apart at times. Both are now stationed together at Fort Bliss in Texas.



Local Chicago Lovers

We can't pass up a recognition of love, marriage, and activism without celebrating the union of two Chicago favorites, Patrick Bova and Jim Darby. They have been together since 1963 and were married on June 2, 2014. They have been active in local and national gay veteran and same-sex marriage issues for decades, including founding the Chicago Chapter of AVER (originally called GLBVA) and being involved with the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network to overturn the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy. They were also lead plaintiffs in Lambda Legal’s lawsuit seeking marriage for same-sex couples in Illinois. Thousands of same-sex marriage licenses have been issued in Cook County since their marriage; they continue to be role models for generations of LGBTQ individuals in Illinois and across the nation. Jim just celebrated his 91st birthday in February, and Patrick will celebrate his 85th birthday in June, so we joyfully celebrate their amazing pride, resilience, and duty to this country. In 2014, they were invited to the White House to introduce President Barack Obama during the LGBTQ Pride Month reception.



Monthly In-person AVER Meetings for the Chicago Chapter • Join Us!

We 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.

Jesse Brown For Black Lives (JB4BL) Task Force

This is a hospital-based health advocacy committee, formed in 2020, to address racism in healthcare impacting Veterans and staff. The task force is composed of about 100 volunteers, including physicians, pharmacists, nurses, social workers, and psychologists. To date, the task force has introduced significant changes in improving healthcare through race-neutral treatment and policies. For more information, contact Jimika King, Healthcare System Specialist to the Assistant Medical Center Director, JBVAMC, 312-569-6212, or jimika.king@va.gov.

Upcoming Events

Liberty Call: A Veteran Networking Event. Chicago Veterans host a networking event in Bridgeview on Thursday, March 16. These events are high-impact networking events consisting of current military members, veterans, spouses, and civilians designed to connect attendees with subject matter experts, organizations, and thought leaders to help build a stronger social support system. For this and other March events, check out <http://chicagovets.org/events/>.

Salute to Military Families Night. The Chicago Wolves are proud to host the 8th annual Salute to Military Families Night on Saturday, April 8, when the team hosts the Iowa Wild at the Allstate Arena at 7pm in Resemont. Check out <https://www.chicagowolves.com/schedule/> for tickets.

= Chicago Chapter 2022-2023 =

AVER Board of Directors

President Brandon Chong
VP/Treasurer Larry Simpson
VP/Secretary Ben Saucedo

Senior Board Members

Bernie Santarsiero
Heather Yang

Junior Board Members

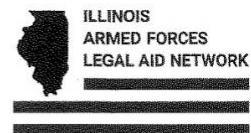
Ben Diseroad
Stanley Jencyk

Social Media: Ben Saucedo *VetPride*: Bernie Santarsiero/Jim Darby Web page: Ben Saucedo
President-Emeritus: Jim Darby Parliamentarian: Larry Simpson

American Veterans for Equal Rights, Chicago Chapter, P.O. Box 29317, Chicago, IL 60629, Telephone: 773-752-0058, www.aver.us and www.averchicago.org. You can email any of the Chicago Chapter officers with the following address: president@averchicago.org, secretary@averchicago.org, or treasurer@averchicago.org.



Center for Disability & Elder Law



FREE legal services available to qualifying veterans on the below legal matters:

- **Housing:** Eviction Defense; Security Deposit Disputes; Co-Owner Disputes; Foreclosures; Property Taxes; Title Correction; Landlord/Tenant Disputes; Building Code Violation Defense; Landlord-side Evictions
 - Qualifications: The veteran must reside in or have the dispute in Cook County.
- **End of Life Planning:** Last Will and Testament; Power of Attorney; Living Will Declaration; Illinois Transfer on Death Instrument
 - Qualifications: The veteran must be an Illinois resident.
- **Consumer Disputes:** Consumer Fraud; Elder Financial Abuse; Collections
 - Qualifications: The veteran must reside in or have the dispute in Cook County.
- **Simple Divorces**
 - Qualifications: The veteran must reside in or have the dispute in Cook County. The divorce must not involve minor children or jointly owned real property.
- **Adult Guardianship**
 - Qualifications: Must seek guardianship over a person, not an estate. The individual that that guardianship is sought over must reside in Cook County.

If the veteran requires assistance on one or more of the above listed legal issues please fill out and return CDEL's Intake Form, or have the veteran call our office Monday to Friday, 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M., at (312) 376-1880.

If the veteran is an Illinois resident and has any other legal issues, please call the Illinois Armed Forces Legal Aid Network at (855) 452-3526.

If the veteran is an Indiana resident and has any other legal issues, please call the Indiana Legal Services Military Assistance Project Monday to Friday, 10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M., at (844) 243-8570.

www.cdela.org, 205 W. Randolph, Suite 1610, Chicago, IL 60606 | P: (312) 376-1880 | F: (312) 376-1885

JESSE BROWN VA MEDICAL CENTER
&
CHICAGO REGIONAL OFFICE VETERANS BENEFITS
ADMINISTRATION



THE PACT ACT:

- ★ EXPANDS AND EXTENDS ELIGIBILITY FOR VA HEALTH CARE FOR VETERANS WITH TOXIC EXPOSURES AND VETERANS OF THE VIETNAM ERA, GULF WAR ERA, AND POST-9/11 ERA.
- ★ EXPANDS ELIGIBILITY FOR BENEFITS FOR VETERANS EXPOSED TO TOXIC SUBSTANCES.

MARCH 25, 2023
9AM-3PM

APPOINTMENTS STRONGLY ENCOURAGED

- [HTTPS://WWW.BENEFITS.VA.GOV/CHICAGO/](https://www.benefits.va.gov/chicago/)
- SELECT VISITOR ENGAGEMENT AND REPORTING APPLICATION (VERA)
- CLICK SCHEDULE IN PERSON APPOINTMENT
- ENTER ZIP CODE
- SELECT PACT_ACT_CLAIMS_CLINIC

- ★ FILE A CLAIM
- ★ BENEFIT QUESTIONS
- ★ HEALTHCARE ENROLLMENT

YOU CAN USE THE QR CODE BELOW TO BE ROUTED TO THE APPOINTMENT REQUEST



AUBURN GRESHAM CBOC
7731 S. HALSTED ST.
CHICAGO, IL 60620