

N.S. Vol. 27 No. 8 August 2023 #390

## National Defense Authorization Act FY 2024

In July, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) passed out of the House of Representation along partisan lines, and included a number of anti-equality amendments that will be difficult to reconcile with the Senate version of the bill. These amendments targeted healthcare, gender-affirming care, education, and LGBTQ+ friendly services and resources, and threaten the health of active duty servicemembers and their families. The amendments sought to undermine protections against race and LGBTQ+ discrimination in the military, restrict access to abortion, deny essential healthcare services including gender-affirming care to transgender service members, eliminate access to the Exceptional Family Member Program (where healthcare is limited based on location), codified a prohibition on drag shows, ban books that present non-binary gender discussion (so-called “radical gender ideology” or “pornographic material”), prevent Pride Month celebration, restrict flags at military installations (thereby prohibiting LGBTQ+ Pride flags), and eliminate the Pentagon’s officers of diversity, equity, and inclusion. *Every one of these restrictions encourages discrimination and reduces military readiness, recruitment, and the overall physical and mental health of our military.* These restrictions impact thousands of servicemembers, veterans, and their families, and do not reflect public opinion where nearly 8 in 10 Americans, including 65% of Republicans, back non-discrimination policies and protections for LGBTQ+ individuals. Contact your local and national Congressional representatives to voice your concern and opposition to these restrictions.

## Senator Tuberville Voting Blockade

Alabama Senator Tommy Tuberville continues to block more than 270 military promotions as the Senate left for their August recess. This is in response to his opposition to Defense Department policy allowing for paid leave abortions. These stalled actions include the appointment of the Commandant for the Marine Corps as well as 10 4-star officers, 54 3-star officers, 70 2-star officers, and 139 1-star officers; 21 of those 3- and 4-star officers have had their retirements deferred to ensure continuity of command. Among the field commands on hold is Rear Admiral Frederick Kacher, selected to lead the Navy’s Japan-based 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet which oversees naval activities for the Asia-Pacific region with over 50 ships and submarines, 150 aircraft, and 27,000 sailors and Marines under command. The current U.S. 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet commander, Vice Admiral Karl Thomas, was nominated in March to be the next Director of Naval Intelligence, a critical position for the service that he will be unable to fill until his nomination is approved in the Senate; the position is currently held by Vice Admiral Jeffrey Trussler, who is seeking retirement. A third stalled appointment is Rear Admiral George Wikoff, who was nominated in January to lead the Navy’s 5<sup>th</sup> Fleet. The command is responsible for the Persian Gulf, Red Sea, Arabian Sea, and Strait of Hormuz, where the U.S. is sending ships, aircraft, and Marines as Iranian ships try to seize oil tankers. It’s also a critical training ground for the U.S. Navy which has created Task Force 59 in the region to experiment with drone ships in the fleet. Also on hold are dozens of nominees to lead the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Missile Defense Agency, Cyber Command and the National Security Agency, and the Army Space and Missile Defense Command. Ultimately, 90% of the U.S. military’s 852 general and flag offices could eventually be affected by this blockade; this year, 650 of them will need to pass through Senate confirmation for promotion or reassignment which another 110 will have to do two jobs simultaneously. If this continues into the Fall term, half of the eight Joint Chiefs will be acting officials, and Joint Chiefs Chair General Mark Milley will be unable to retire. Senator Tuberville never served in the military, and is using this issue for fundraising.

## Supreme Court Ruling

In June, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that the First Amendment rights to free artistic expression and religious beliefs were violated for a Christian graphic artist and website designer Lorie Smith in Colorado with the 303 Creative LLC vs. Elenis Supreme Court decision. This decision overturns other attempts over decades to allow public businesses to exclude certain customers based on personal beliefs and views. The ruling will lead to more identity-based discrimination where people will be unable to access the goods and services that they require to live their own lives. Discriminatory practices impact individuals by creating greater gaps in accessing education, health, wealth, and employment opportunities, and embolden more conservative state legislatures to enact anti-LGBTQ+ laws. Already in 2023, 491 anti-LGBTQ+ bills have been introduced in state legislatures—this is more than 60% the number of bills that were introduced in 2022. Everyone needs to continue to vote and contact your elected officials on the negative impact of these anti-LGBTQ+ laws. Exclusion and segregation harms all of us, and will reduce military recruitment, service retention, and national security.

## AVER Responds to NDAA Draft Bill

“Congress should never pick and choose which servicemembers will be treated for medical conditions and which will not. The denial of critical care based on political grandstanding is a betrayal of a sacred obligation to care for soldiers and their families. Breaking that obligation undermines national security by eroding the trust of the men and women who volunteer to defend our nation’s freedom.” The draft of the NDAA bill for FY2024 passed from the House denies lifesaving gender affirming care not only to transgender servicemembers but also transgender children of servicemembers. The American Psychological Association, American Psychiatric Association, and the American Medical Association support gender affirming care as critical in the treatment of Gender Dysphoria. “The U.S. Department of Defense utilizes evidence-based clinical practice guidelines to care for every servicemember who seeks care.” In addition to world-class healthcare services that treat chemical exposure and burn treatment, prosthetic devices, gynecological care and non-selective abortion care, the DOD provides full support for mental health issues such as substance abuse, PTSD, Major Depressive Disorder, and Gender Dysphoria. Every man and woman who serves our country deserves the very best treatment available.

### 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](http://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.**

### = Chicago Chapter 2022-2023 =

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## Shero Uncorked

Shero Uncorked provides a relaxed outdoor environment where veterans come together to enjoy delicious food, great music, and meaningful fellowship to share stories of women in the military. It's a companion event to the Shero Coffee Club (<https://www.sherocoffee.com/>), a coffee subscription company dedicated to honoring women veterans. To learn more, check out <https://sherouncorked2023.eventbrite.com>.



## Korean War Veterans

Last month, on July 29, veterans and others commemorated the 70<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the Korean War Armistice of 1953 in Kennedy (Dennis) Park, 11320 S. Western Ave, Chicago. In 1986, as Korean War veteran Ed McCarthy marched in a downtown Chicago parade honoring Vietnam War veterans, he began to think of ways to commemorate those who served with him in the "Forgotten War." After North Korean troops invaded in 1950, the United Nations urged its members to support South Korea. Although the U.S. Congress never formally declared war, millions of Americans fought in the Korean War between 1950 and 1953, and more than 50,000 were killed. The Windy City Veterans Association raised funds to build the memorial, Maurice Moore donated his time to build and engrave the memorial, and it was dedicated on September 15, 1988 in Kennedy Park. The semi-circular form is inscribed with the words: "The veterans of the greater Chicago area present this memorial in memory of those men and women who served during the Korean War so that those who sacrificed so much in the cause of freedom will never be forgotten." You can get more information from George Mulvaney, [LZ4Vets@gmail.com](mailto:LZ4Vets@gmail.com), or 773-704-2150.



## Jesse Brown VAMC Town Hall Meeting

Annual town hall meeting on Tuesday, August 8, 5-6pm (Central time) to hear updates and ask questions about Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs), Adam Benjamin Jr., Auburn Gresham, Chicago Heights, and Lakeside. Join by calling 833-380-0741, or stream audio and chat live on <https://www.facebook.com/VACHicago>



SERVICES OFFERED AT ADAM BENJAMIN JR. CBOC:

- ACUPUNCTURE
- AUDIOLOGY
- CHIROPRACTIC CARE
- DENTAL- WHEN ELIGIBLE
- DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS (DAV)- VOLUNTEER BASED DRIVERS FOR VETERANS
- ENROLLMENT AND ELIGIBILITY
- LABORATORY
- MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES-INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP COUNSELING, PTSD CLINIC, SUBSTANCE USE THERAPY, FAMILY THERAPY, PEER SUPPORT, PSYCHIATRY
- NUTRITION/DIETETICS-INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP
- OPTOMETRY
- ORTHO INJECTION CLINIC
- PHARMACY
- PHYSICAL MEDICINE AND REHABILITATION
- PODIATRY
- PROSTHETICS
- RADIOLOGY
- SLEEP APNEA CLINIC
- SMOKING CESSATION
- SOCIAL WORK SERVICES
- UROLOGY-WHEN ELIGIBLE
- VOLUNTARY SERVICES
- WEIGHT MANAGEMENT/MOVE PROGRAM
- WHOLE HEALTH/WHOLE FOOD PLANT BASED CLASSES
- WOMEN'S HEALTH



**ADAM BENJAMIN JR.**  
COMMUNITY BASED OUTPATIENT CLINIC


**OUR SERVICE**

Serving Counties: Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Jasper, Starke, Newton

## ABOUT US


The Jesse Brown VA Medical Center consists of a 220 bed facility (158 acute care beds) and four community based outpatient clinics. Jesse Brown VAMC provides care to approximately 49,000 Unique Veterans who reside in the City of Chicago and Cook County, Illinois and in six counties in northwestern Indiana. In FY18, the medical center had 7852 inpatient admissions and 629,209 outpatient visits. A budget of over \$475 million supports approximately 2431 full time equivalent staff, including 200 physicians and 530 nurses.

The Adam Benjamin Jr. CBOC serves Veterans living in the Northwest Indiana area. The clinic served approximately 12,000 Veterans in FY2021, using the array of services offered at the clinic. If services are needed outside of what is offered, Veterans have the option to go to the main hospital Jesse Brown in Chicago, or use community care when eligible.



## ABJ NORTHWEST INDIANA HOMELESS WALK-IN CLINIC

**MONDAY-FRIDAY**  
8:30 AM- 4:00 PM

 (219) 662-5000 EXT. 55299  
HOUSING/EMERGENCY SHELTER

AFTER HOURS OR IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE:

**HOMELESS CRISIS HOTLINE:**


 1-877-424-3838

**INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

 8:00 AM- 4:30 PM  
1-877-424-3838

**NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE**

 (24HRS)  
800-799-SAFE (7233)



## CONTACT US

 219-662-5000

 9301 Madison Street  
Crown Point , IN 46307

**Veterans Crisis Line**

1-800-273-8255  
PRESS 1

  U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health Administration  
Jesse Brown VA Medical Center