



BVA LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR 117th CONGRESS

The organization's advocacy efforts during the first session of the 117th Congress will focus on the following critically important issues:

- I. Call upon Congress, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and the Department of Defense (DoD) to request that the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs (ASDHA) work with the United Kingdom (UK) Minister of Defence to provide funding for the Joint Ocular Trauma Task Group (JOTTG) established by mutual formal agreement on September 29, 2020;
- II. Request that the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) include a mandate that the DoD Defense Health Agency (DHA) comply with Section 703 of the NDAA (Public Law 114-328) of FY17 requesting the designation of four ocular trauma specialty centers;
- III. Request FY22 appropriations of \$30 million for the DoD Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP) Vision Research Program (VRP), strengthening the "ONLY" research program focused on prevention and treatment of combat-related ocular trauma and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) visual dysfunction;
- IV. Support adequate funding of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Blind Rehabilitation Service (BRS);
- V. Request that the VA auto grant for service-connected blinded veterans have a renewal period of every ten years;
- VI. Support the continued improvement of programs and services for women veterans;
- VII. Ensure that VA implement caregiver benefits for catastrophically "blinded" disabled veterans, mandating the modification of eligibility criteria regarding "Activities of Daily Living" to include caregivers for blinded veterans;
- VIII. Request the enactment of adequate protections for guide dogs and service dogs on federal properties;
- IX. Support the FY22-23 Independent Budget recommendations for Prosthetics and Sensory Aids;
- X. Support oversight of VA compliance with accessibility requirements.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS DURING 116th CONGRESS

- I. Enacted H.R. 3504 modernizing VA's Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) grant program and mandating that eligibility criteria be inclusive of legally blind veterans. ***Signed into law on August 8, 2020;***
- II. Supported and urged swift Senate passage of H.R. 4920, which continued VA contracts with AbilityOne® programs that employ blinded and visually impaired veterans. ***Signed into law on August 8, 2020;***
- III. Enacted S. 3587 (companion bill H.R. 1199) mandating VA's compliance with website accessibility as required by Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 United States Code §794d), amended by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-220). ***Signed into law on December 4, 2020;***
- IV. Supported and urged passage of H.R. 7105, improving and expanding programs and services for women veterans. ***Signed into law on January 5, 2020.***