



2026 NACVSO Legislative Priorities

The National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO) represents Governmental Veteran Service Offices (GVSOs) operating at the state, county, tribal, and municipal levels nationwide. GVSOs assist veterans and their families with disability claims, appeals, health care access, community care coordination, transportation, education benefits, survivor benefits, and other services.

Because they work directly with veterans at the local level, NACVSO members have unique insight into the challenges veterans encounter and the support VA needs to improve service delivery.

NACVSO urges Congress and the Department of Veterans Affairs to focus on the following policy priorities.

Strengthen Intergovernmental Cooperation

Implement and Extend the CVSO Act (P.L. 118-210)

NACVSO recommends extending the CVSO Act authorization from two years to five years to ensure sufficient time for VA to fully implement the program and achieve its intended outcomes.

- The CVSO Act was enacted during the 118th Congress as part of the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act (P.L. 118-210).
- The law was intended to improve outreach and assistance to veterans through enhanced collaboration with local Governmental Veteran Service Offices.
- Although the program was scheduled for implementation in Fiscal Years 2026 and 2027, implementation has not yet occurred, VA does not anticipate that it will go live until 2027.
- To understand the Act's impact on veteran service delivery congress should seek an extension for FY 28-FY30.

Implement the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act (P.L. 118-196)

NACVSO encourages VA to fully implement these provisions and assess the potential benefits of establishing formal liaison positions between VA and local GVSOs.

The Veterans Benefits Improvement Act (P.L. 118-196) includes provisions intended to strengthen coordination between VA and accredited representatives.

The law requires:

- VA disability examination schedulers to coordinate with veterans' accredited representatives
- VA to consult with stakeholders, including local governments, when preparing reports on improving coordination with local GVSO offices
- Consideration of enhanced intergovernmental access to VA systems for GVSOs

Improve National Collaboration on Veterans Policy S. 3726 - National Veterans Strategy Act of 2026

NACVSO supports this legislation that establishes a framework for federal and non-federal entities to identify challenges, align resources, and coordinate policy solutions to improve outcomes for veterans and their families.

Veterans' policy requires coordination among federal, state, and local partners.



Provide Local Government Representation in Congressional Oversight Hearings

State and county representatives currently testify alongside Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) during joint committee hearings. While these organizations work collaboratively, state and county veteran service offices represent governmental entities performing distinct roles in delivering veterans services. This would improve congressional understanding of the intergovernmental delivery of veterans' services.

NACVSO recommends establishing a **separate hearing panel for local governmental organizations**, including:

- National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA)
- National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO)
- National Association of State Veterans Homes (NASVH)

Protect Veterans and Improve Benefits Access

Protect Veterans from Unaccredited Claims Consultants H.R. 1732 - GUARD Act S. 2344 - VA Claim Sharks Effective Warnings Act

NACVSO supports efforts to protect veterans from predatory and unaccredited claims consultants who charge unauthorized fees for assistance with VA disability claims.

NACVSO supports legislation that would:

- Restore penalties for individuals who solicit or charge unauthorized fees for initial claims representation
- Strengthen enforcement against unaccredited claims consultants
- Improve VA outreach to educate veterans about deceptive claims assistance practices

VA already maintains an accreditation system for qualified representatives, including GVSOs, VSOs, attorneys, and claims agents. Any expansion of paid representation at the initial claims stage should occur only after evaluating the effectiveness of the existing accredited representation system.

Improve Coordination Between VA and Accredited Representatives

Accredited representatives play an important role in ensuring claims are properly developed and submitted to VA.

NACVSO recommends:

- Utilizing accredited representatives to reduce unnecessary claims development
- Reinstating a **pre-decision review process** similar to the historical "48-hour VSO review"
- Establishing standardized procedures for Power of Attorney inquiries at VA regional offices
- Re-evaluating policies that limit representatives' ability to assist veterans with scheduling Higher-Level Reviews

Require Accreditation Identification on VA Forms

Accredited representatives receive unique identification numbers from the VA Office of General Counsel.

NACVSO recommends requiring representatives to include their accreditation number when preparing or submitting VA benefit applications.

This would improve accountability, help prevent unaccredited claims preparation, allow VA to track claims activity, and provide organizations with feedback to improve representative training.



Improve Implementation of Toxic Exposure Policies

Improve Implementation of TERA

- NACVSO supports legislative and administrative improvements to VA’s implementation of the Toxic Exposure Risk Activity (TERA) provisions.
- NACVSO members continue to observe situations where TERA medical opinions are requested even when other service-connection pathways are clearly established. TERA was intended to provide an additional pathway to service connection, not to become a separate theory of entitlement under 38 CFR.
- Current implementation practices can result in unnecessary delays, confusion, and denials for veterans.

Expand Presumptive Coverage for Known Toxic Exposures

NACVSO supports expanding presumptive coverage for well-documented toxic exposures affecting service members.

PFAS Exposure

NACVSO supports:

- H.R. 3639 - VET PFAS Act

Perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are hazardous industrial chemicals widely used by the military, including in firefighting foam (AFFF) and equipment coatings. Department of Defense reports indicate that **723 installations are being assessed for PFAS contamination.**

Karshi-Khanabad (K2) Exposure

NACVSO supports:

- H.R. 3441 - K2 Veterans Total Coverage Act

More than 15,000 service members served at the K2 base in Uzbekistan, where potential exposures included depleted uranium, VOCs, jet fuel, and asbestos. Research indicates increased cancer risks among these veterans.

Infertility and Toxic Exposure

NACVSO supports:

- H.R. 7841 - Warrior Infertility Act

Studies indicate approximately **15.8% of OIF/OEF veterans and 13.8% of veterans report infertility**, potentially linked to toxic exposures and repeated deployments.

Improve Access to VA Health Care Service

Reduce Barriers to VA Health Care Enrollment H.R. 4114 - EVEST Act, H.R. 683 - Combat Veterans Pre-Enrollment Act, & H.R. 1845 - TAP Promotion Act

NACVSO recommends allowing transitioning service members to automatically enroll in VA health care prior to discharge, with the option to opt out. Veterans can already initiate disability claims before separation; similar pre-discharge enrollment should exist for health care.

NACVSO supports policies that improve access to VA health care and strengthen the transition from military to civilian life.



Strengthen Patient Advocacy and Care Coordination H.R. 2068 - Veterans Patient Advocacy Act, H.R. 2970 - National Veterans Advocate Act, & S. 3653 - Veterans' Bill of Rights Act

Patient advocates play a vital role in helping veterans navigate the VA health care system.

NACVSO recommends:

- Increasing the number of Patient Advocates
- Establishing **Care Coordinator** roles to assist veterans with specialty referrals and care navigation
- Ensuring veterans clearly understand their rights within the VA system
- **Office of Patient Advocacy operate independently from VHA operational leadership**

Improve Health Care Access for Women Veterans H.R. 220 - Veterans Infertility Treatment Act, H.R. 1646 - Lactation Spaces for Veteran Moms Act, H.R. 1860 - Women Veterans Cancer Care Coordination Act, & H.R. 7841 - Warrior Infertility Act

Women veterans are the fastest-growing segment of the veteran population. The PACT Act expanded presumptive coverage for several reproductive cancers affecting toxic-exposed women veterans.

NACVSO recommends:

- Expanding presumptive coverage to include infertility affecting both male and female veterans
- Improving care coordination for women veterans diagnosed with reproductive cancers
- Ensuring adequate lactation spaces at VA facilities

Expand Residential Mental Health and Addiction Treatment Capacity H.R. 740 / S. 275 - Veterans' ACCESS Act

Veterans seeking treatment for mental health or substance use disorders should not face lengthy delays when they are ready to seek help.

NACVSO recommends expanding residential rehabilitation treatment capacity and utilizing community care facilities when appropriate.

Modernize the CHAMPVA Application Process

The CHAMPVA program requires modernization. NACVSO recommends improving application intake and processing timelines, providing confirmation when applications are received, and allowing accredited representatives to securely upload documentation to VA.

Expand Access to VA Dental Care H.R. 210 - Dental Care for Veterans Act

Dental health is an essential component of overall health. NACVSO supports expanding eligibility for VA dental services and improving access for veterans who currently lack dental coverage.

