



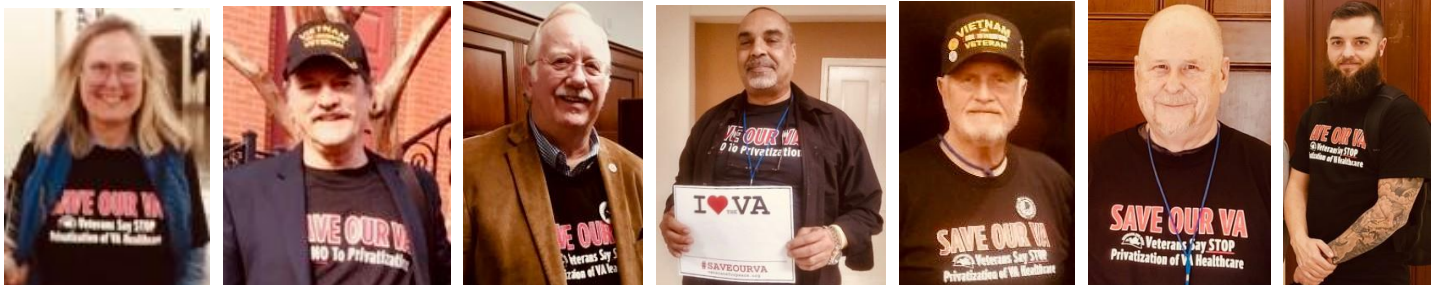
The SOVA CONFERENCE in Washington Feb 9-12 was A GREAT SUCCESS!

- 29 Participants From 14 States Attended the Conference
- We agreed to support House Resolution (HR) 701, a statement of principle by House Members for fully funding and staffing VA healthcare and not dismantling the VHA. (See Page 5 for More Info.)
- We decided to lobby to get as many House Members as possible to join the 8 members who are already Co-Sponsors of HR 701.
- We met with 33 Members of Congress (MOC) or their staff and urged them to Co-Sponsor HR 701.
- As a result of our advocacy, two House Members -- Rep Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY, 14th) and Rep Adriano Espaillat (D-NY, 17th) – became Co-Sponsors of HR 701.
- We return to our communities to rally our supporters and allies to join us in urging House members to step up and become Co-Sponsors of HR 701.

WE NEED YOUR HELP TO GET HOUSE MEMBERS TO SUPPORT HR 701 & TO RAISE \$15,000 TO GET THE STORIES OF VETERANS ONTO SOCIAL MEDIA.

While we were in Washington, we videoed veterans who depend on the VA for their healthcare. They told their stories celebrating VA healthcare as life-saving and explained why privatization will lead to dismantling the VHA. Now we need to raise \$15,000 to enable us to edit their powerful stories and get them onto social media and onto the SOVA website.

We need VETERANS to tell their stories to the world on social media explaining why we need to SAVE OUR VA!



Help Get The Voices of These Veterans On Social Media: Ellen Barfield (Baltimore), Skip Delano (New York), John Ketwig (Virginia), Maurice Martin (Oakland), Jan Ruhman (San Diego), Dan Shea (Portland), Jackson Shepard (Fresno)

SOVA Conference expenses totaled over \$8,000. We thank the following donors to the SOVA Conference:

VFP Chapter 091 (Asheville, NC); VFP Chapter 034 (New York City); Andrea Schwartz (New York City); Bonnie Willdorf (San Francisco); Dana Minaya (New York City); Skip Delano (New York City); Eileen Canty (New York City); Elizabeth Wiesen (New York City); Eric Dirnbach (New York City); Frank Fitzgerald (Chicago); Jay Youngdahl (South Pasadena, CA); Joseph Kebartas (South Boston); Laura Friedman (New York City); Leland Lubinsky (Loma Linda, CA); Lisa Fenton (Guilford, CRT); Molly Sweeney (New York City); Page Delano (New York City); Paul Hollister (Lebanon, NH); Sabiha Kazi (Oviedo, FL); Sara Back (New York City); John Spitzberg (Willow, AK); Jackson Shepard (Fresno); Bruce Carruther (Asheville, NC)

Please give a generous tax-deductible donation.

GO TO <http://saveourva.org/> TO SUPPORT SOVA'S NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO STOP THE PRIVATIZATION OF VA HEALTHCARE



**REPORT ON THE FIRST NATIONAL SOVA CONFERENCE,
WASHINGTON, DC, FEB 9-12**



VISIT TO AFGE'S VA COUNCIL MEETING: Early Sunday morning a dozen of us arrived in DC to appear at the AFGE's Legislative Conference where the VA Council was meeting. We were recognized and solidarity was expressed by representatives of the VA unions serving our brothers and sisters working at VA hospitals.

FIRST MEAL AND INTRODUCTIONS: The SOVA Conference opened Sunday night, Feb. 9, with a dinner meal prepared by Conference Chef Liz Wiesen and volunteer helpers. (A system of KP duty was established to deliver the 11 meals for participants during the Conference.) After dinner we went around the room and introduced ourselves to other Conference participants.



SOVA CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS (29 Participants from 14 states) **Alaska**, John Spitzberg; **California**, Jackson Sheperd, Suzanne Gordon, Maurice Martin, Jan Ruhman; **Florida**, Willie Hager; **Georgia**, Janice Jamison; **Maryland**, Ellen Barfield, Michael Marceau; **Massachusetts**, Jeffery Parente; **Minnesota**, Arlys Herem, Jeff Roy; **Missouri**, Kevin Barry, Bob Suberi; **New Mexico**, Brenda Bailey-White; **North Carolina**, Bruce Carruther; **New Jersey**, Kyle Bibby; **New York**, Essam Attia, Mick Cole, Skip Delano; **Oregon**, Dan Shea; **Virginia**, John Ketwig, Naveed Shah; **GUESTS:** William Attig, Union Veterans, AFL-CIO (Washington); Jasper Craven, Journalist (New York); Steve Early, Journalist (Oakland); Stephen Frum, National Nurses United (Washington); Colleen Kelly, Communications Coordinator, VFP National Office (St Louis); Liz Wiesen, Conference Chef (New York).

DISCUSSION OF SOVA GOALS: On Monday, Feb 10, the Conference opened by reviewing the goals of VFP's Save Our VA Working Group and its Campaign to Stop the Privatization of VA Healthcare. A series of speakers addressed different topics.



Skip Delano (New York)



Suzanne Gordon (San Francisco)



Jeff Roy (Minneapolis)



Dan Shea (Portland)



Jan Ruhman (San Diego)

VISIT TO AFGE'S DISTRICT MEETINGS: Monday afternoon, Feb. 10th, we returned to the AFGE Legislative Conference and visited their District meetings. We introduced ourselves, unfolded SOVA banners and distributed nearly 1,000 flyers to AFGE members during our visits on Sunday and Monday. Our goal was to reach out to and strengthen our ties to VA workers as our allies in the Campaign to Stop Privatization of VA Healthcare.



Activists & SOVA Banner at D12 Meeting: Jan Ruhman, Maurice Martin, Jackson Shepard & AFGE D12's Ian Hoffman

Nearly a 1,000 SOVA Flyers Distributed

PREPARING FOR LOBBYING: Tuesday morning we continued our training and preparation for lobbying. Conference participants divided into three Lobbying Teams (#1, #2, #4 – no #3). Each Team began reviewing what we were asking MOC to do for us, assigning roles for each member of the Team and practicing working together.



Lobbying Teams 2 & 4 Preparing for Lobbying

LOBBYING MEMBERS OF CONGRESS: Tuesday afternoon, Feb 11, and Wednesday, Feb 12, were devoted to lobbying Members of Congress (MOC). We concentrated on House members. **We had meetings with 11 Conference participants' MOC and 22 (13 Democrats & 9 Republicans) members of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs.** Our message to all was to Stop Privatization of VA Healthcare and become Co-Sponsors of **H.Res.701 Expressing support for policies that maintain a robust, fully funded and staffed Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs and do not jeopardize care for veterans by moving essential resources to the for-profit private sector.**

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/701>



Lobbying Team 1 After Meeting Rep Chip Roy



Lobbying Team 4 Outside the House Building

WE HAD MEETINGS WITH 11 CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS' MOC: Before coming to Washington, many Conference participants scheduled meetings with their own MOC and we met with of them: Rep Earl Blumenauer (D-Or, 3rd), Rep Suzanne Bonamici (D-Or, 1st), Rep. Jim Costa (D-CA, 16th), Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR, 4th), Rep Adriano Espaillat (D-NY, 17th), Rep Deb Haaland (D-NM, 1st), Representative Carolyn B. Maloney (D- NY, 12th), Rep Mark Meadows (R-NC, 11th), Rep Joseph Morelle (D-NY, 25th), Rep Denver Riggleman (R-VA 5th), Rep Emily Ann Wagner (R-MO, 2nd)

MEETINGS WITH 22 MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS (HCVA) The HCVA has 27 members. Jeff Roy (Minneapolis) scheduled meetings with 22 (13 Democrats & 9 Republicans) of those members: Rep Colin Allred (D-TX, 32nd), Rep. Jim Banks (R-IN, 3rd), Rep. Garland Barr (R-KY, 6th), Rep. Jack Bergman (R-MI, 1st), Rep. Gus Michael Bilirakis (R-FL, 12th), Rep. Anthony Brandisi (D-NY, 22nd), Rep. Julia Brownley (D-CA, 26th), Rep. Gilbert Ray Cisneros (D-CA, 39th), Rep. Joe Cunningham (D-SC, 1st), Rep. Suzanne Lee (D-NV, 3rd), 12th), Rep. Mike Levin (D-CA, 49th), Rep Elaine Luria (D-VA, 2nd), Rep. Daniel Meuser (R-PA, 9th), Rep. Colin Peterson (D-MN, 7th), Rep. Aumua Radewagen (R- American Samoa, 1st), Rep. Kathleen Rice (D-NV, 4th), Rep. Max Rose (D-NY, 11th), Rep. Chip Roy (R-TX, 21st), Rep. Gregario Sablan (I-North Mariana Islands, 1st), Rep W. Gregory Steube (R-FL, 17th), Rep Mark Takano (D-CA, 41st), Rep Steve Watkins (R-KS, 2nd)



Lobbying Team 1 Inside a MOC's Office

SAVE THE VA TOWN HALL: A HEALTHY VA MEANS HEALTHY VETS Tuesday evening National Nurses United, a VA union, sponsored a Town Hall at the Capitol Hill Presbyterian Church where the SOVA Conference was based. It was a high-energy event and a welcome evening after returning from our first day of lobbying on the Hill.



Over 70 people attended the Town Hall including a contingent of NNU nurses from the Washington VA Hospital.



Town Hall Speakers (L to R): Elaine Sherman, NNU; Suzanne Gordon, Author; Skip Delano, VFP's SOVA; Rick Weidman, VVA; Kelvon Gloer, AFGE



After the Town Hall ended, everyone came to the front for a group photo.

ALL DAY LOBBYING ON WEDNESDAY, FEB 12: Our 3 Lobbying Teams returned to a full-day in the House Office Buildings (Canon, Longworth, Rayburn) meeting with MOC or their aides.



Lobbying Team 1 After Meeting With the Staff of Rep Rice



Lobbying Team 2 Meeting With Rep Mark Takano, Chairman of the House CVA

TWO MOC BECOME CO-SPONSORS OF HR 701 When we arrived in Washington for the SOVA Conference, HR 701 had 8 Co-Sponsors, all from Nov and Dec, 2019. Before we left Washington, two members of the House became Co-Sponsors. First was **Rep Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY, 14th)** who was not able to meet with us but agreed to become a Co-Sponsor on Feb 10. She was followed by **Rep Adriano Espaillat (D-NY, 17th)**. Team 2 met with his staff member on Feb 12



Lobbying Team 4 Outside Rep Alexandria-Ocasio's Office Where the Wall is Covered With Post-Its From Well-Wishers



SOVA Conference Planning Team:

- Skip Delano**, NYC (sdelano897@aol.com; 917-5662317);
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- Suzanne Gordon**, San Francisco (sg@suzannegordon.com; 617-460-6606)
- Jeff Roy**, Minneapolis (royjeff48@gmail.com; 952-924-932);
- Dan Shea**, Portland (shea@veteransforpeace.org; (503-750-7649)

The SOVA Working Group urges our supporters and allies to lobby their MOC to Co-Sponsor House Resolution 701. We are also planning to sponsor protests at as many VA hospitals as possible on JUNE 5th, 2020, the one-year anniversary of the MISSION ACT'S PRIVATIZATION OF VA HEALTHCARE. For more information visit our website or email us.

PROTESTS AGAINST THE MISSION ACT'S PRIVATIZATION OF VA HEALTHCARE WERE HELD AT MORE THAN A DOZEN VA HOSPITALS ON JUNE 5-6, 2019



New York City



Jamaica Plains, MA



Minneapolis



San Diego

JOIN VETERANS AND OUR ALLIES IN A NATIONAL DAY OF PROTESTS AT VA HOSPITALS TO SAVE OUR VA HEALTHCARE

FRIDAY, JUNE 5, 2020

- STOP THE MISSION ACT'S PRIVATIZATION OF VA HEALTHCARE
- FIX VA HOSPITALS, FULLY FUND & FULLY STAFF VA HOSPITALS
 - STOP UNION BUSTING AT THE VHA

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOW YOU CAN JOIN US CONTACT

<http://saveourva.org/>

or Email saveourvahealthcare@gmail.com

Save Our VA eNews

Sign Up on the SOVA Website to Receive SOVA's Bi-Weekly Newsletter