



## **2008 Veterans Task Force Report**

The CCD Veterans Task Force used its meetings during 2008 to educate its members about various programs sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs as well as other federal agencies that serve veterans with disabilities. Early in the year, the task force heard from Richard Hartman with the Veterans Health Administration concerning the organization of VA medical centers, community based outpatient clinics and rural health care services. Several meetings were devoted to briefings on employment resources offered through the VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program and the Department of Labor's America's Heroes at Work.

The task force held a roundtable discussion with several veterans' service organizations (VSOs) in February to learn about the veterans' groups' priorities for the coming year and to discuss areas of common interest. Arising from that meeting was a letter in support of the ADA Amendments Act signed by over fifteen veterans' or military family organizations. In September, the task force received a briefing on the Independent Budget for the VA, a document prepared annually by four major VSOs outlining the resources needed for the VA to serve veterans and used frequently by Congressional policymakers as their guide to VA programs and funding. CCD organizations were invited to become endorsers of the Independent Budget.

The task force continued to support legislation introduced by Cong. John Sarbanes (D-MD) to qualify automatically for Social Security Disability Insurance those veterans with a VA disability rating of 100%. In addition, the task force supported a bill sponsored by Cong. Ed Perlmutter (D-CO) to create four Epilepsy Centers of Excellence within the VA. That legislation passed in September.

The task force contributed to the CCD's comprehensive transition document and to the Employment and Training Task Force's Statement of Principles on Employment of People with Disabilities.

For 2009, the task force intends to continue regular discussions with the VSO community and with representatives from the new Administration. Among the issues identified for further examination are: the transition process between the military and VA that veterans with disabilities experience; VA contracting processes with community providers; long term care and long term services and supports for veterans with disabilities; and the VA disability claims backlog.

The task force meets on the second Friday of each month.

Co-Chairs:

Susan Prokop, Paralyzed Veterans of America

Brad Turner-Little, Easter Seals