



The Voice of VA Physicians and Dentists Since 1975

# NEWS

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## HVAC Chair Updates NAVAPD on Legislative Activities

I'm Phil Roe, and I'm a proud veteran. I served our country in 1973 and 1974 as a captain in the 2nd U.S. Infantry Division 2nd Medical Battalion and was stationed near the DMZ in Korea for nine months and at the 121 Evacuation Hospital in Seoul for three months. After my service, I practiced medicine as an OBGYN in Johnson City, Tenn., for more than 30 years. Since 2008, I've served Tennessee's First Congressional District in Congress, and this year was given the honor of chairing the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

The VA's sole mission is to serve our heroes, and you can rest assured that – under my watch – I will do everything in my power to ensure the department remembers and honors that mission. I'm proud that Republicans and Democrats in Congress are united in their efforts to do the right thing on behalf of our nation's heroes. So far in this Congress, the House has passed 16 bills, two of which have been signed into law, to improve the lives of America's veterans and build a better VA.

I'm particularly proud of legislation the House passed to improve VA's ability to recruit and retain high-quality healthcare providers and other professionals. Ensuring our nation's heroes receive the best quality health care means ensuring they are treated by the very best providers, and I look forward to getting this bill signed into law so that high-quality professionals are encouraged to head to VA for their careers.

What's more, the committee is working on more

than a dozen other bills, including legislation to expand education benefits and bring wholesale reform to VA. This Congress, we are also focused on extending and improving the Choice Program, as well as addressing issues with VA medical centers and clinics, so veterans can access quality health care when they need it most. You can read more about these important reforms at [veterans.house.gov/legislation](http://veterans.house.gov/legislation).

Aside from improving veterans' experiences with



NAVAPD President Spagnolo with HVAC Chairman Phil Roe

VA, one of my focuses as chairman is to bring a culture of accountability to the department. I've said time and time again that the vast majority of the employees at the VA like the medical professionals who take care of our heroes are hardworking and have the best interests of our veterans at heart, but there are still too many bad apples within the department. Our veterans deserve better, and the VA employees who fulfill their duties deserve better.

The House passed the VA Accountability First Act of 2017 to give Secretary Shulkin the tools he needs to discipline employees who don't live up to the standards expected of those who serve our nation's heroes. I know the Senate plans to take up this legislation in the coming weeks.

We can never truly do enough to thank the soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines who faithfully serve, but as Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I am dedicated to ensuring veterans are treated with the care and respect they've earned.

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## The President's Corner

Samuel V. Spagnolo, MD

Contrary to the news, much has happened in Congress since this began in January. The House of Representatives has passed many bills involving VA healthcare issues culminating in the bipartisan bill "VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act" and signed by President Trump last month. This bill will enable the VA Secretary to take action against problem employees in a faster, more expedient fashion, while still preserving their employee rights.

I am writing this column on July 4th, Independence Day and the United States of America's 241st birthday. By world standards we are a young country. My parents have a European background and I remember my family discussing events in the 14<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries long before America was founded. When family members visited Heidelberg, Germany, they had marveled at the damage done to that beautiful castle by the Allies during World War II only to find out it had suffered much earlier damage as far back as the 1400s.

America, in its short lifespan founded upon liberty and freedom has been exceptional and we need to continue that exceptionalism especially in providing healthcare for our veterans, which is the primary reason we are free and continue to prosper.

We have had very constructive meetings with the House Veterans Affairs Committee's new leadership team. Chairman Roe has written a column for inclusion in this newsletter and Subcommittee Chairman Brad Wenstrup has asked NAVAPD to include "podiatrists" into our membership which we are pleased to do.

As you may know, the DC VA Medical Center has been under VAOIG review for the last few months. This is my hospital and the issues reported have been in existence for quite some time and were largely ignored by VA management. I am encouraged that constructive steps will be taken and the many critical problems resolved permanently.



NAVAPD President Spagnolo  
with HVAC VA Health  
Subcommittee Chairman  
Brad Wenstrup

Don't hesitate to reach out to us about things of interest to you and/or your medical center. NAVAPD is here for all the physicians, dentists and podiatrists in the VA system in providing the best possible care to our Nation's Veterans.

## VA Accountability & Whistleblower Protection Act

The VA Accountability and Whistleblower Act was recently passed by Congress and signed by President Trump on June 23.

**Background and highlights of the law:** The Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017 will:

- Create a new streamlined and efficient process to remove, demote or suspend (for longer than 14 days) any VA employee for poor performance or misconduct with a concrete shortened timeline, while still protecting employees' due process rights, and would provide them with the right to

appeal the action.

- Provide expanded protections for whistleblowers and would specifically bar the VA from using this removal authority if the employee has an open whistleblower complaint/case with the Office of Special Counsel.
- Provide the Secretary with the authority to reduce an employee's federal pension if they are convicted of a felony that influenced their job at VA; recoup a bonus provided to an employee who engaged in misconduct or poor performance prior to receiving the bonus; and allow the Secretary to recoup any relocation expenses that were authorized for a VA employee only

through the employee's ill-gotten means, such as fraud, waste or malfeasance.

- Authorize the Secretary to directly appoint individuals to the positions of Medical Center Director and Director of Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) if they have a demonstrated ability in the medical profession, health care administration or health care fiscal management. This will make it easier to fill these critical positions quickly. The House and Senate passed this legislation on June 13, 2017 and June 6, 2017, respectively.

*(Continued on page 4)*

## HouseVAC 115th Congress Oversight Investigative Agenda

The House Veterans Affairs Committee (HVAC) published its oversight and investigative agenda for the 115th Congress 2017-18. The following excerpts from the agenda are of interest to NAVAPD members:

### Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

#### **Accountability and Civil Service Reform**

– The Committee will continue to look for ways to increase the number of veterans employed at VA and will examine ways to streamline the hiring process for all VA employees. In addition, the Committee will continue its oversight of disciplinary actions taken against VA employees. Further, the Committee will continue its existing efforts to reform VA's antiquated civil service system. Recent reports from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) have found that it can take six months to a year (and sometimes significantly longer) to dismiss an employee. This system while well intended, is clearly broken and not serving veterans. The Committee will continue its oversight of disciplinary actions at VA and will examine ways to provide true accountability to poor performing employees.

### Subcommittee on Health

#### **Choice, Community Care Consolidation, and Health Care Reform**

– The Committee will consider needed actions to improve the Choice program, consolidate the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) disparate community care programs and authorities, and reform the VA healthcare system to ensure the timely, efficient delivery of high-quality care to veteran patients both inside VA medical facilities and in the community. Community care is a critical component of the VA health care system as, without effective partnerships with community providers, VA would be unable to provide timely, accessible care to veteran patients. As part of this effort, the Committee will examine how to organize a high-performing network of primary care providers in the community, per the recommendation of the Commis-

sion on Care, as well as other means of empowering veteran patients to control their own care. The Committee will also examine how to modernize VA's claims processing system to ensure that community providers receive prompt, accurate reimbursement for the services they provide to veteran patients on VA's behalf.

**Capital Asset Review** – The Committee will continue aggressive oversight of VA's major medical facility construction and leasing program and consider needed actions to address VA's vast and aging capital asset portfolio. It has been well-established that VA major medical facility construction projects are consistently over-budget and behind schedule. The Committee will also address ways to move forward with VA major medical facility lease authorizations, which have been prevented from moving forward due to Congressional budgeting rules.

#### **Mental Health and Suicide Prevention**

– The Committee will continue to closely oversee VA's mental health and suicide prevention efforts. In 2016, VA released the most comprehensive analysis of veteran suicide data to date. That report found that the suicide rate among veterans is approximately twenty percent higher than the rate among civilians and that about two-thirds of veterans who commit suicide do not use VA services. In light of these findings, the Committee will continue aggressive oversight of VA's mental health programming and outreach efforts, to include the Readjustment Counseling Service. As part of this effort, the Committee will address a number of recent concerns that have arisen around the operations of the Veterans Crisis Line and evaluate the effectiveness of actions VA has taken to rectify those concerns. The Committee will also continue overseeing VA's implementation of Public Law 114-2, the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act, which - among other things - requires VA to partner with community organizations to improve the transition process for veterans.

#### **Pain and Medication Management and Complementary and Integrative Health**

– The Committee will examine the increasing use of prescription medications to treat veterans experiencing acute and chronic pain. The effective management of pain is a critical issue for the veteran population as data suggests that veterans are a particularly high-risk population for prescription misuse, substance use disorder, accidental overdose, accidents, and/or self-inflicted injury and recent studies have shown that those veterans with the highest-risk conditions are also the most likely to receive the highest-dose, highest-risk opioid therapies. Public Law 114-198, the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016, makes a number of changes to VA pain management programs and protocols. Accordingly, the Committee will examine VA's implementation of P.L. 114-198 and evaluate further actions needed to improve pain and medication management for veteran patients. The Committee will also assess the use and efficacy of complementary and integrative health treatments and techniques for veterans with pain or other conditions.

**Telehealth** – The Committee will assess the effectiveness of VA's telehealth programs. Telehealth is an increasingly important tool to increasing access to care for veteran patients. In fiscal year 2015 alone, VA completed two million telehealth appointments, many of those to rural veterans. The Committee will assess the effectiveness of VA's telehealth program as well as VA's response to challenges such as a lack of reimbursement structure for telehealth appointments and ambiguity surrounding VA providers' ability to practice telehealth across state lines and evaluate the need for further actions in those areas.

#### **Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Long Term Rehabilitation**

– The Committee will continue to examine the treatment provided to veterans with TBI and ac-

(Continued on page 4)

## VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act (continued)

(Continued from page 2)

### The following is a summary of other whistleblower protection legislation that has been introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives:

In a bipartisan move to beef up whistleblower protections, the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee approved a trio of bills on May 2 to expand the Office of Special Counsel's access to personnel files and ensure whistleblowers have broader access to courts.

#### HR 2229

The All Circuit Review Act ensures that whistleblowers who live outside Washington have the same rights as those who live here.

This bill would make permanent a pilot provision in the 2012 Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act that allows whistleblowers to appeal cases from the Merit Systems Protection Board to any circuit court of appeals with jurisdiction; and give the Office of Personnel Management authority to file petitions for court review of MSPB orders.

#### HR 2196

Allows whistleblowers covered by the Whistleblower Protection Act to make disclosures of classified information to any supervisors "in the employee's direct chain of command up to and including the head of the employing agency."

#### HR 2195

OSC Access Act would clarify Congress' intent that the Office of Special Counsel has authority to obtain all relevant information from agencies under its jurisdiction.

The bill stipulates that "a claim of common law privilege by an agency, shall not prevent the OSC from obtaining any material;" and that an agency "does not waive the right to assert common law privileges against non-federal entities or individuals by providing information to the OSC."

NAVAPD is tracking these bills and will post any changes on our website ([www.navapd.org](http://www.navapd.org)). ☒

## HVAC 115th Congress Oversight Investigative Agenda (continued)

(Continued from page 3)

tions needed to ensure the availability of long-term, age-appropriate rehabilitation for veterans with TBI or other conditions. Identifying and implementing innovative treatments to aid wounded veterans in their recovery and allow them to regain functionality and quality of life has been a long-standing Committee priority and will continue to be. As part of this effort, the Committee will conduct continued oversight regarding the ongoing community-based brain injury residential rehabilitative care pilot program.

**Toxic Exposure** – The Committee will

examine VA's efforts to improve research and treatment for veterans who may be experiencing negative health effects due to toxic exposure during military service. Public Law 114-315, the Jeff Miller and Richard Blumenthal Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2016, requires VA to improve research regarding the descendants of individuals with toxic exposure. Subsequently, the Committee will evaluate the implementation of that law as well as further action needed to improve care and services to veterans who may have been impacted by toxic exposure during military service.

### Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations

**Whistleblowers** – Whistleblowers continue to be a vital source of accurate and timely information. Protecting an employee's legal right to communicate with Congress, and report to the Inspector General alleged violations of laws, rules or regulations, waste, abuse, mismanagement, and safety issues is essential for investigations and effective oversight of the executive branch. This Committee looks to protect whistleblowers from reprisal by developing legislation in addition to existing federal whistleblower protections. ☒

## NAVAPD Lifetime Members Recognized — THANK YOU!

Joseph Abate, DMD  
Kenneth Becker, MD  
Luvenia Bender, MD  
Kulandaiv Chandrasekaran, MD  
Jeffrey Chenoweth, MD  
Robert Conroy, MD  
Thomas Girvan, DMD  
Susan Grenz, MD  
Dina Hooshyar, MD

Rose Jacob, MD  
Patrick Joyce, MD  
Asha Kaza, MD  
Patricia King, MD  
Jean Kuriakose, MD  
Georgia Laliotis, MD  
Sathya Maheswaran, MD  
Vinod Makhija, MD  
Elise Malecki, MD  
James Martin, MD

Gloria Niehans, MD  
Betsy Nolan, MD  
Dennis Ommert, MD  
Herbert Perkins, MD  
John Pollard, MD  
Bernd Remler, MD  
Rianna Romanowski, MD  
Laurence Rubenstein, MD  
Roberta Schaffner, MD  
Edwin Simon, MD

Stephen Sontag, MD  
David Stein, MD  
Olaf Stuve, MD  
William Todd, MD  
Ana Valdez-Scalice, MD  
Erin Warshaw, MD  
John Watkins-Pitchford, MD  
Theresa Yuschok, MD

## Meet the House of Representatives Veterans Affairs Committee



**David "Phil" Roe**  
Chairman

**Chairman David "Phil" Roe (R-Tenn.),** born July 21, 1945, in Clarksville, Tenn., graduated from Austin Peay State University in Clarksville in 1967 and received his medical degree from University of Tennessee in Knoxville in 1970. Chairman Roe served in the U.S. Army Medical Corps at Camp Casey in South Korea from 1973 until his discharge in 1974. Prior to joining Congress in 2009, he ran an OB/GYN practice for 31 years where he delivered nearly 5,000 babies, was a member of the Johnson City, Tenn., Board of Commissioners from 2003-2007 and served as mayor of Johnson City from 2007-2009. Chairman Roe is a member of the House Education and Workforce Committee and serves as co-chair of the GOP Doctor's Caucus.

**Representative Jodey Cook Arrington (R-Texas),** born March 9, 1972, in Plainview, Texas, received his B.A. in 1994 and his M.A. in 1997 from Texas Tech University in Lubbock. He served as an advisor to President George W. Bush in 2001, as chief-of-staff to FDIC Chairman Don Powell from 2001-2005, and as Vice Chancellor of Texas Tech University where he helped secure the naming rights to the Laura W. Bush Institute for Women's Health in 2007. Rep. Arrington began serving Texas' 19th District in the U.S. Congress in January 2017.

**Representative James E. Banks (R-Ind.),** born July 16, 1979, in Columbia City, Ind., received a B.A. from Indiana University in Bloomington in 2004 and an M.B.A. from Grace College and Seminary in Winona Lake, Ind., in 2013. He worked in commercial construction and real estate and served in the Indiana State Senate from 2010-2016. As a U.S. Navy reservist, Rep. Banks took a leave of absence from the senate in 2014 and 2015 to deploy to Afghanistan where his military leadership earned him the Defense Meritorious Service Medal. Rep. Banks began his term in the U.S. Congress in January 2017 and serves on the Science, Space, and Technology Committee in addition to the HVAC.

**Representative John "Jack" Bergman (R-Mich.),** born Feb. 2, 1947, in Shakopee, Minn., graduated with a B.A. from Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minn., in 1969 and an M.A. from University of West Florida in Pensacola, Fla., in 1975. U.S. Marine Corps Lieutenant General Bergman retired from the military after 40 years of service from 1969-2009. Prior to representing Michigan's 1st district beginning in January 2017, he was a commercial pilot and a business owner in the medical equipment industry.

**Representative Gus Bilirakis (R-Fla.),** born Feb. 8, 1963, in Gainesville, Fla., received his B.A. from the University of Florida in Gainesville in 1986 and his J.D. from Stetson University in St. Petersburg Fla., in 1989. In addition to his private law practice, he served as a member of the Florida State House from 1998-2006. Rep. Bilirakis was elected to replace his father, Rep. Michael Bilirakis, in representing Florida's 9th District, including the Tampa Bay Area, in January 2007. He is the Co-Chair of the Congressional Military Veterans Caucus and a member of the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

**Representative Mike Bost (R-Ill.),** born Dec. 30, 1960, in Murphysboro, Ill., served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1979-1982. He graduated from the



**Tim Walz**  
Ranking Member

Certified Firefighter II Academy at the University of Illinois in 1993 and worked as a first responder while serving six terms as a member of the Illinois State House of Representatives from 1995-2014. Rep. Bost managed a trucking business and co-owns the White House Salon with his wife Tracy in Murphysboro. He began representing Illinois' 12th District in January 2015 and serves on the Committee on Agriculture Committee and the Committee on Small Business as well as the HVAC.

**Representative Mike Coffman (R-Colo.),** born March 19, 1955 in Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., served in the U.S. Army from 1972 -1974. He received his B.A. from the University of Colorado in Boulder in 1979 that he attended on the G.I. Bill while serving in the Army Reserves from 1975-1978. Rep. Coffman served in the U.S. Marine Corp from 1979-1982 and the Marine Corp Reserve from 1983-1994 and 2005-2006. Prior to the U.S. Congress, Rep. Coffman served in the Colorado State House of Representatives from 1989-1994, the Colorado State Senate from 1994-1998, as Colorado state treasurer from 1999-2007, and as the Colorado Secretary of State from 2007-2008. Rep. Coffman, who began representing Colorado's 6th District in January of 2009, is the only member of Congress to have served in both Iraq Wars. In

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## Members of the House Veterans Affairs Committee (continued)

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In addition to the HVAC, he serves on the Armed Services Committee.

**Representative Neal Patrick Dunn (R-Fla.),** born Feb. 16, 1953, lived in more than 20 countries, including Vietnam, growing up in a multi-generational Army family. He received a B.S. from Washington & Lee University in Lexington, Va., an M.D. from the George Washington University, Washington, D.C., completed a residency in urology at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and served as a surgeon in the U.S. United Army from 1989-2010. Prior to representing Florida's 2nd District in the U.S. Congress, Rep. Dunn built a 45-physician urology practice and was the founding chairman of a local bank. In addition to the HVAC, he is a member of the Committee on Agriculture and the Committee on Science, Space and Technology.

**Representative Jenniffer Gonzalez (R-P.R.),** born Aug. 5, 1976, in San Juan, Puerto Rico, received a B.A. from the Universidad de Puerto Rico in Rio Piedras and a J.D. and an L.L.M. from the Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico in Aibonito. She was the first female elected from her district and the youngest woman ever elected to the Puerto Rico Legislative Assembly. Prior to her service as the youngest and first woman Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico in 2016, Rep. Gonzalez was a member of the House of Representatives of Puerto Rico from 2002-2016 and its Speaker from 2009-2012.

**Representative Clay Higgins (R-La.),** born Aug. 24, 1961 in New Orleans, attended Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge from 1979-1983 before serving in the U.S. Army and in the Louisiana Army National Guard. Prior to joining Congress in January 2017 as the representative of Louisiana's 3rd District, Rep. Higgins worked as a business manager and sheriff of the St. Landry Parish from 2008-2016, where he earned recognition as "Uncle Clay," a SWAT operator in his Crimestopper videos. In addition to the HVAC, he is a

member of the House Committee Science and Space Technology and House Committee on Homeland Security.

**Representative Bruce Lee Poliquin (R-Maine),** born Nov. 1, 1953, in Waterville, Maine, graduated from Phillips Exeter Academy in Exeter, N.H., in 1972 and Harvard University in Cambridge in 1976 with a degree in economics. He was a businessman and the state treasurer of Maine from 2010-2012 who ran unsuccessfully for governor of Maine in 2010 and for the U.S. Senate in 2012 before he began representing Maine's 2nd District in the U.S. Congress in January 2015.

**Representative "Aumua Amata" Coleman Radewagen (R-American Samoa),** born Dec. 29, 1947, in Washington, D.C., received a B.S. from the University of Guam in 1975 and attended George Mason University in Fairfax, Va., and Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. Her father, Peter Tali Coleman, was the longest serving Governor of Samoa and the first of Samoan descent. Rep. Radewagen was a journalist, a community leader and activist, and is a cancer survivor. In January 2015, she became the first woman from American Samoa elected to the U.S. House and the first Republican woman of Samoan descent to serve in the U.S. Congress.

**Representative John Henry Rutherford (R-Fla.),** born Sept. 2, 1952, in Omaha, Neb., graduated with a B.S. from Florida State University in Tallahassee, Fla., in 1974. He began his career in law enforcement that year and served in the Jacksonville sheriff's office from 1995-2003 before becoming sheriff from 2003-2015. Rep. Rutherford began representing Florida's 4<sup>th</sup> District on January 2017. In addition to his work on the HVAC, he is a member of the Committee on Homeland Security.

**Representative Brad Wenstrup (R-Ohio),** born June 17, 1958, in Cincinnati, received a B.A. from the University of Cincinnati in 1980 and a B.S. and a D.P.M. from the William M. Scholl Col-

lege of Podiatric Medicine in Chicago in 1985. In addition to his 26-year practice as a podiatric surgeon, Rep. Wenstrup has served in the U.S. Army Reserves beginning in 1998. He was awarded the Bronze Star and the Combat Action Badge for his service as a combat surgeon in Iraq from 2005-2006. He is a member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, the Armed Services Committee, and is the Chairman of the HVAC's Subcommittee on Health. He has served Ohio's 2<sup>nd</sup> District since January 2013 while fulfilling his Reserve duties by treating patients at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda.

**Ranking Member Tim Walz (D-Minn.),** born April 6, 1964, in West Point, Neb., received a B.S. from Chadron State College in Chadron, Neb., in 1989 and a M.S. from Minnesota State University in 2001. He served in the Army National Guard for 24 years beginning in 1981 while taking teaching positions on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota and in the People's Republic of China. As a Command Sergeant Major, Rep. Walz is the highest ranking enlisted soldier to have ever served in the U.S. Congress. He began serving Minnesota's First District in January 2007 and sits on the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Agriculture in addition to the HVAC.

**Representative Julia Brownley (D-Calif.),** born Aug. 28, 1952, in Aiken, S.C., received a B.A., from Mount Vernon College (The George Washington University) in Washington, D.C., in 1975 and an M.B.A. from American University in Washington, D.C., in 1979. Rep. Brownley worked in marketing in private industry prior to her public service career as a member of the Santa Monica-Malibu School District Board from 1994-2006 and member of the California State Assembly from 2006-2012. She received the YWCA's "Woman of the Year" award in 2005. Rep. Brownley, who began serving California's 26<sup>th</sup> District in January 2013, is the Ranking

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## Members of the House Veterans Affairs Committee (continued)

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Member of the VA Subcommittee on Health and sits on the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

**Representative Jose Luis Correa (D-Calif.),** born Jan. 24, 1958 in Los Angeles, received a B.A., from California State University in Fullerton in 1980 and a J.D. and M.B.A. from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1985. He was an investment banker, a real estate broker and a college instructor prior to his service as a member of the California State Assembly from 1998-2004, on the Orange County, Calif., Board of Supervisors from 2005-2006 and as a member of the California State Senate from 2006-2014. Rep. Correa, who began serving California's 46<sup>th</sup> District in January 2017, sits on the Committee on Homeland Security in addition to the HVAC.

**Representative Elizabeth Esty (D-Conn.),** born Aug. 25, 1959, in Oak Park, Ill, received a B. A. from Harvard University in Cambridge in 1981 and a J.D. from Yale University in New Haven in 1985. She clerked for a federal judge, was a member of the Supreme Court bar and taught at American University in Washington D.C. Rep. Esty, a member of the Connecticut State General Assemble from 2009-2011, began her term to the U.S. Congress in January of 2013. She is the Ranking Member of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and sits on the Committee on Science, Space and Technology in addition to the HVAC. As the representative for Newton, Conn., she is the Vice-Chair of the House Gun Violence Prevention Task Force.

**Representative Ann McLane Kuster (D-N.H.),** born Sept. 5, 1956, in Concord, N.H.—where her father Malcolm McLane was mayor from 1970-1976—received a B.A. from Dartmouth College in Hanover, N.H., in 1978 and a J.D. from Georgetown University, in Washington, D.C., in 1984. Prior to her political career, Rep. McLane practiced education and non-profit law while facilitat-

ing more than 300 adoptions as a member of the Academy of Adoption Attorneys. She began representing New Hampshire's Second District in the U.S. Congress in January 2013 and is the Ranking Member of the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations and sits on the Committee on Agriculture Committee and the Committee on Small Business. In 2004, she coauthored the book, *The Last Dance: Facing Alzheimer's with Love and Laughter*, with her mother Susan McLane, who suffered from the disease.

**Representative Robert "Beto" O'Rourke (D-Texas),** born Sept. 26, 1972, received a B.A. from Columbia University in New York in 1995. As a singer and guitarist for the band Floss in the early 1990s, Rep. O'Rourke recorded two albums and toured the United States and Canada in 1993. He owned an Internet and software services company prior to serving on the El Paso City Council from 2005-2011. He began representing Texas' 16<sup>th</sup> District in the U.S. Congress in January 2013 and sits on the Armed Services Committee. Rep. O'Rourke formally announced his candidacy for the U.S. Senate seat currently held by Senator Ted Cruz on March 13, 2017.

**Representative Scott Peters (D-Calif.),** born June 17, 1958, in Springfield, Ohio, received a B.A. from Duke University in Durham, N.C. in 1980 and a J.D. from New York University in 1984. He was an economist for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency from 1980-1981 and an environmental lawyer in private practice for 15 years before his election to the San Diego City Council where he served from 2000-2008 and subsequently became the first City Council President in the two remaining years of his term. Rep. Peters began serving California's 52<sup>nd</sup> District in the U.S. Congress in January 2013 and sits on the House Energy and Commerce Committee in addition to the HVAC.

**Representative Kathleen Maura Rice (D-N.Y.),** born Feb. 15, 1965, in Manhat-

tan, New York, received a B.A. from Catholic University in Washington, D.C., in 1987 and a J.D. from the Touro Law Center in Central Islip, N.Y. in 1991. She began her career as the assistant district attorney in Kings County (Brooklyn) and was appointed Assistant U.S. Attorney for Philadelphia by Attorney General Janet Reno in 1999. Rep. Rice beat a 31-year incumbent to serve as the District Attorney of New York's Nassau County from 2006-2014. She began representing New York's 4<sup>th</sup> District in January 2015 and serves on the Committee on Homeland Security and is the Ranking Member on the Transportation Security Subcommittee in addition to HVAC.

**Representative Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan, (I-Northern Mariana Islands),** born Jan. 19, 1955 in Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands, attended University of Hawaii in Manoa from 1989-1990. He was a member of the Northern Mariana Islands Commonwealth Legislature from 1982-1986 while serving in the Army Reserves from 1981-1986 and before becoming a special assistant to U.S. Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawaii in the late 1980s. Rep. Sablan began his service to the U.S. Congress in 2009 as is the first delegate elected from the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands and serves on the Committee on Natural Resources and the Committee on Education and the Workforce in addition to the HVAC.

**Representative Mark Takano (D-Calif.),** born Dec. 10, 1960, in Riverside, Calif., December 10, received a B.A. from Harvard University in Cambridge in 1983 and an M.F.A. from the University of California in Riverside in 2010. Rep. Takano, whose grandparents and parents were interned in a War Relocation Camp during World War II, Calif., taught public school for 23 years while also serving as a member of the Riverside Community College District Board of Trustees from 1990-2012. In January of 2013, he began representing California's 41<sup>st</sup> District and serves on the Committee on Education and the Workforce in addition to the HVAC. α

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**NAVAPD's Mission and Principles**

***Mission***

**N**AVAPD is dedicated to the principle that this nation's veterans, as a result of their service to our country's Armed Forces, have earned an entitlement to quality health care to meet their needs as they become sick or injured. The Department of Veterans Affairs ("VA") is that agency of government obligated to honor the Nation's contract with its deserved Veterans.

**NAVAPD** has as its highest priority the preservation and strengthening of the VA health care system, so that it stands ever ready to give our veterans quality medical care equal to or better than that which can be obtained elsewhere in our society.

Just as VA doctors care for those who have served, they also stand ready to treat the military and civilian casualties of future conflicts and non-military disasters.

VA health care facilities are a principal element in our national security and in our national defense, representing as they do a vast resource to back up the limited capabilities of our military hospitals.

***Guiding Principles***

**NAVAPD** shall function as the official professional organization of the VA physicians and dentists at all levels in the VA Health Care system, from the local health care facilities through VISNs to the national level.

**NAVAPD** shall cooperate to the maximum extent possible with official representatives of the VA, to the end that the best possible health care is provided to veteran beneficiaries.

**NAVAPD** shall endeavor to ensure that qualified physicians and dentists are recruited into the VA Health Care system and retained therein.

**NAVAPD** shall support VA physician research, participate in activities of professional organizations, continuing medical education and participation in equal partnership affiliation with medical schools.

**Officers/Directors**

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