



THE FAIRFIELD VETERAN'S MESSENGER

FAIRFIELD COUNTY VETERANS' SERVICE
COMMISSION
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NEW BILL BENEFITS 'BLUE WATER' VETS



This is only a bill that is introduced. This has not been passed yet. Contact your Congressman.

2009 VETERANS' SERVICE COMMISSION

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May 12, 2009

House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

Congress Must Act to Restore Earned Benefits to All Vietnam Veterans

Washington, D.C. – House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Bob Filner (D-CA) announced the introduction of H.R. 2254, a bill to restore equity to all Vietnam veterans that were exposed to Agent Orange.

"We owe it to our veterans to fulfill the promises made to them as a result of their service," said Chairman Filner (D-CA). "If, as a result of service, a veteran was exposed to Agent Orange and it has resulted in failing health, this country has a moral obligation to care for each veteran the way we promised we would. And as a country at war, we must prove that we will be there for all of our veterans, no matter when they serve. The courts have turned their backs on our veterans, but I believe this Congress will not allow our veterans to be cheated of their earned benefits."

[H.R. 2254](#) would clarify the laws related to VA benefits provided to Vietnam War veterans suffering from the ravages of Agent Orange exposure. In order to try to gain a better military vantage point, [Agent Orange](#), which we now know is a highly toxic cocktail of herbicide agents, was widely sprayed for defoliation and crop destruction purposes all over the Vietnam War Battlefield, as well as on borders and other areas of neighboring nations. It was also stored on U.S. vessels and used for vegetation clearing purposes around U.S. bases, landing zones and lines of communication.

Currently, VA requires Vietnam veterans to prove a "foot on land" occurrence in order to qualify for the presumptions of service-connection for herbicide-exposure related illnesses afforded under current law. This issue has been the subject of much litigation and on May 8, 2008, the Federal Circuit Court of Appeals upheld VA's overly narrow interpretation and the Supreme Court later denied certiorari essentially affirming this ruling. However, Congress clearly did not intend to exclude these veterans from compensation based on arbitrary geographic line drawing by VA.

H.R. 2254 is intended to clarify the law so that Blue Water veterans and every servicemember awarded the Vietnam Service medal, or who otherwise deployed to land, sea or air, in the Republic of Vietnam is fully covered by the comprehensive Agent Orange laws Congress passed in 1991. If enacted, this bill will make it easier for VA to process Vietnam War veterans' claims for service-connected conditions that are linked to toxic exposures during the Vietnam War and that are identified in current law.

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NEW BILL BENEFITS 'BLUE WATER' VETS cont...

Chairman John Hall leads the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs, the subcommittee with jurisdiction over these issues. He stated, "With this legislation, Congress will leave no doubt that the 'Blue Water Navy' and all combat veterans of Vietnam are intended to be covered and compensated; thus ensuring that these veterans will receive the disability benefits they earned and deserve for exposure to Agent Orange. This is the cost of war. We asked these brave men and women to fight for us and serve their country, and it is a grave injustice that they have had to wait this long for treatment. We must place care of our soldiers among our top priorities. This applies for all past, present, and future conflicts."

"Time is running out for these veterans," concluded Chairman Filner. "Many are dying from their Agent Orange related diseases, uncompensated for their sacrifice. There is still a chance for America to meet its obligations to these noble veterans. I will work with my Congressional colleagues to provide the earned disability benefits and health care to the thousands of Navy blue water veterans and survivors that earned this care in battle."



PURPLE HEART POSTAGE STAMP UPDATE 01

Tammy Duckworth, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) assistant secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, recently spoke at a U.S. Postal Service ceremony announcing the reissue of the Purple Heart stamp. This is the fifth issue of the Purple Heart definitive postage stamp. The Purple Heart stamp was first issued on May 20, 2003. The reissued stamp features a photograph by Ira Wexler of one of two Purple Hearts awarded to James Loftus Fowler of Alexandria, Va., who was battalion commander of the Third Battalion, Fourth Marines serving in Vietnam. A picture of the new Purple Heart stamp is available on the U.S. Postal Service website http://www.usps.com/communications/newsroom/2009/pr09_022.htm. For more information, contact your local post of-



VA DENTAL TREATMENT UPDATE 04

A dental insurance program for veterans, modeled after retiree dental insurance provided under Tricare, is an optional health program being pushed by Sen. Richard Burr of North Carolina, ranking Republican on the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. For premiums of between \$14 and \$48 a month, depending on the location and selected benefits, 7.9 million veterans could have access to a network of dentists, Burr said. VA presently provides dental care to veterans with service-connected dental disabilities, those who are 100% disabled for any condition, and those who were prisoners of war for 90 days or longer. Additionally, veterans newly separated from active duty can receive one-time dental treatment within 180 days from VA if their discharge records show they were receiving dental treatment that was not completed before they were discharged. Burr's proposal, S.498, envisions optional group dental insurance that would be administered by VA but with costs fully covered by premiums, a concept that makes it attractive to lawmakers worried about holding down government costs. In the 109th Congress expansion of VA dental care were sought through bills introduced by Rep. Steve Buyer (H.R.6277) and Sen. Richard Burr (S.3178). These bills along with H.R.5595 to expand dental care to all vets with service connected disabilities bills did not receive sufficient support to become law. [Source: NavyTimes article 1 Jun 09 ++]

ONLY DONATE TO CHARITIES YOU KNOW. BE CAREFUL WHERE YOUR DONATIONS GO!

Among other things, the rating chart shows fund raising costs per \$100 raised for each charity. Some of the figures are truly shocking!

Americans gave millions of dollars in the past year to veterans charities designed to help troops wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan, but several of the groups spent relatively little money on the wounded, according to a leading watchdog organization and federal tax filings.

Eight veterans' charities, including some of the nation's largest, gave less than a third of the money raised to the causes they champion, far below the recommended standard, the American Institute of Philanthropy says in a report. One group passed along 1 cent for every dollar raised, the report says. Another paid its founder and his wife a combined \$540,000 in compensation and benefits last year, a Washington Post analysis of tax filings showed.

Many veterans' charities are woefully inefficient, spending large sums on costly direct-mail advertising. They over solicit. They love to send out a lot of trinkets and stickers and greeting cards and flags and things that waste a lot of money that they get little return on.

The philanthropy institute gave F's to 12 of the 29 military charities reviewed and D's to eight.

Five were awarded A-pluses, including the Fisher House Foundation in Rockville, which the institute says directs more than 90 percent of its income to charitable causes.

One group received an A, and one received an A-minus.

The Better Business Bureau said the agency has 20 standards for reviewing charities, including that a charity's fundraising and overhead costs not exceed 30 percent of total contributions.

The American Institute of Philanthropy, a leading charity watchdog, issued a report card this month for 29 veterans and military charities. Letter grades were based largely on the charities' fundraising costs and the percentage of money raised that was spend on charitable activities.

Air Force Aid Society (A+)

American Ex-Prisoners of War Service Foundation (F)

American Veterans coalition (F)

American Veterans Relief Foundation (F)

AMVETS National Service Foundation (F)

Armed Services YMCA of the USA (A-)

Army Emergency Relief (A+)

Blinded Veterans Association (D)

Disabled American Veterans (D)

Disabled Veterans Association (F)

Fisher House Foundation (A+)

United Spinal Associations' Wounded Warrior (D)

Veterans of Foreign Wars and Foundation (C-)
tion (D)

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (D)

World War II Veterans Committee (D)

Freedom Alliance(F)

Help Hospitalized Veterans/ Coalition (F)

Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund (A+)

Military Order of Purple Hearts (F)

National Military Family Association (A)

National Veterans Services Fund (F)

National Vietnam Veterans Committee (D)

Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (A+)

NCOA National Defense Foundation (F)

Paralyzed Veterans of America (F)

Soldier's Angels (D)

USO (C+)

Veterans of the Vietnam Wary & The Veterans Coali-

VietNow National Headquarters (F)

See <http://oversight.house.gov/documents/20071213131834.pdf> for information and complete listings.

MEDICARE PART B PREMIUMS UPDATE 05

New Social Security recipients and upper-income seniors could face a steep increase in their monthly Medicare premiums for the next two years, according to an analysis released 26 May by a nonprofit health research group. Millions more will see their finances squeezed if their premiums for Medicare Part D prescription drug coverage go up during that period. Congress could intervene to soften the blow, but doing so would be costly at a time of ballooning deficits. The study, by the Kaiser Family Foundation, points out that Social Security and Medicare trustees project no cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to Social Security benefits in 2010 and 2011, and only a tiny one in 2012. The COLA is pegged to an inflation index, and the economic recession has erased increases in the relevant index.

In 2009 seniors received a 5.8% COLA, the largest in more than a quarter-century, but those days are gone for the near future. Over the next two years, however, monthly premiums for Medicare Part B coverage will increase sharply under existing law, which requires premiums to cover 25% of program costs. Part B pays for doctor bills and other outpatient costs, and the monthly premiums that seniors pay are deducted from their Social Security benefits. The 2009 premium for most beneficiaries is \$96.40 per month. Medicare trustees project Part B premium increases to \$104.20 per month in 2010 and \$120.20 per month in 2011. A "hold harmless" clause in existing law will protect about 75% of current Social Security beneficiaries from any increase in their Medicare premiums in the years when there is no COLA, or when it falls below the increase in the monthly Part B premium. But many of the remaining seniors, according to Kaiser, could see their Part B premiums rise, cutting into their monthly Social Security benefits. Three beneficiary groups are impacted as follows:

The first group that will be hit by these increases, without receiving any COLA to offset the pain, are new enrollees in Social Security, Kaiser said.

The second affected class comprises relatively affluent Medicare beneficiaries — those with adjusted gross incomes above \$85,000 for individuals and \$170,000 for married couples, who already must pay a surcharge for their Medicare coverage.

The final group, the largest of those affected, is composed of low-income seniors. But they will not have to pay the increased Medicare Part B premiums themselves. Instead, the Medicaid program, funded jointly by state and federal governments, will cover the increase. But that means higher Medicaid costs for those governments.

REMEMBER: For all your veterans needs come to your Veterans Service Commission Office.

We are Located at:

Fairfield County Veterans Service Commission

227 E Main Street ; Lancaster, OH 43130

Phone: (740) 689-6202

**AMERICA is #1
Thanks to it's
VETERANS**

