

News and Views

Volume 21 Issue 4 April 2019

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Vietnam Veterans of America Redwood
Empire Chapter 223

PO Box 1583, Santa Rosa, CA 95402 Meets at,

see below

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NEWS AND VIEWS



Volume 21 Issue 4 April 2019
PLEASE SHARE THIS NEWSLETTER WITH OTHER VETERANS

President’s Message:

I have just returned from our national board meeting. There are a lot of exciting things going on around the country as well as all we are doing here. At the top of the list the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Robert Wilkie, presented, at the state presidents meeting, an award from the Department of Veterans Affairs to VVA for our work on the Blue Water Navy bill. Because of our efforts he has decided to let the court ruling stand and allow the government to make the rules to be able to treat and compensate Navy veterans for their exposures. We are not giving up on the Blue Water Navy Bill. It does have differences between the court decision and the law we support. They have to do with, how far out to sea does fresh water go during the rainy season, and the bill includes bases in Thailand and the surrounding area. Our staff in the national office has been working non stop on this as well as all the chapters and state members that keep the conversation going with their legislators. All the national committees are looking at their resolutions to see what needs updated, retired or if new resolutions are needed to accomplish our mission. Our national resolutions set our legislative agenda. Our national president reports our legislative agenda every year to the joint committees on veteran’s affairs in congress. We have been unwavering on many issues and have held our course when others have gone in a different direction. If you wish to see or hear the presentation to the joint committee you can go to our national web page and there is a link. On the local side I would like to be able to start with the agent orange town hall meetings again, to get the information out about the birth defect to the children of all veterans. Some only see it as it affects the veteran’s health. Many do not see the effect on the children and spouses. A lot of veterans do not have chil-

dren and we think there is an association to their exposure that is a factor in this. The issue today is not the illnesses that the veteran gets today that is associated with age, forty years ago this was a major issue, but we are looking at the similarities between the problems we had with our children and the current veterans are having with theirs. There are functional issues with the children that mirror the issues we faced. These were followed by progressive illnesses that resulted in auto-immune disorders and other problems. I laid out my projects at the general meeting. At least some of which I wish to accomplish. We elected our directors for the next two years, congratulations to Joe, Tony, Whit, Gabe and George, our newest director. I will do my best to teach what needs to be taught in the ways of VVA. Next year we elect the officers. We do have a lot of projects besides the ones that I lay out. Each member has their own favorite programs or projects. I hope everyone is enjoying our newsletter. Barbara is new at the job and doing a great job. She is still looking for articles and human-interest stories that she can add to the news. Remember that this is a family paper. I was honored at the Board of Supervisors meeting Tuesday as the Veteran of the Year. The certificate was from the county, but the vote came from the veteran organizations at the United Veterans Council. Please remember to look at the calendar and try to attend when you can. We have many things going on and would love to talk about how you see our progress. If I miss anything let us know. I have noticed that I have made a few errors lately regarding dates and even.

See Photos next page

VVA Chapter 223 President Ken Holybee receiving
Sonoma County Veteran of the Year Award



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Mike Thompson
MEMBER OF CONGRESS FIFTH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

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Requests & Dedications
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1/2019

June 2019

						1 Poker Night Region 8 & 9 conference in Reno
2	3	4	5 Wednesday Night Market Set up 3:30	6 D-Day Continuum of Care 12:30	7	8
9	10 Veterans & Family Advisory Comm. 12:30	11 Board Mtg. 1pm	12 Wednesday Night Market Set up 3:30	13	14	15 In 1979, VVA changes name from Council of Vietnam Vets to Vietnam Veterans of America
16	17	18	19 Wed. Night Market Set up 3:30	20	21	22 Newsletter Articles Due
23/30	24	25	26 Wed. Night Market Set up 3:30	27 Newsletter folding 10:00	28	29

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Clinic Coffee Cart:	Lou Nuñez
Color Guard:	
Dinner/Dance:	Lou Nuñez
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Legislation:	Ken Holybee
Membership:	Whitt Patterson
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Contributors to the News and Views: Ken Holybee, Kate O’Hare-Palmer. Thanks to all. Would like to see more articles next month. Support the chapter. I don’t write articles, I just put it together. There are a lot of interesting stories out there, send

Notice

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of VVA,INC., National, State or Chapter 223 or the newsletter staff, but those of the corresponding party. All articles by the Chapter have permission for reprint in all Vietnam Veterans of America newsletters. Anything else permission must come from the original source.

If you would like to purchase a Business Card sized **sponsorship** to put in our NEWSLETTER, Please call the chapter office. Phone number is: 707-526- 4218

New Assistant Dir of Veteran Health

Good afternoon,

As requested, my bio is below.

Rebecca Patterson is an assistant director for the Veterans Health Council of Vietnam Veterans of America, where she focuses on veteran health outcomes related to toxic exposures during military service. She graduated from the University of Maryland in 2018 with a Master of Public Health in Environmental Health Sciences. She also holds a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee (UWM). While at UWM, Rebecca served as president of Student Veterans of America at UWM and the inaugural veteran advocacy senator in Student Association. Prior to beginning her MPH, she completed a service year at SVA National as an AmeriCorps VISTA. She was also a 2017 Mission Continues fellow, 2018 Veterans in Global Leadership fellow and 2019 Fulbright award semi-finalist. Rebecca served in the US Navy from 2005-2011, and completed one deployment to the Persian Gulf in support of the Global War on Terrorism.

Respectfully,

Rebecca Patterson, MPH
Assistant Director, Veterans Health Council
Vietnam Veterans of America
(301) 585-4000 ext. 122
rpatterson@vva.org



Pictures of Huey at the Wall that Heals with Tony, Joe, and others



May 2019

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Wednesday Night Market - set up @ 3:30	2 Continuum of Care 12:30pm Food Distrib.	3	4
5	6	7	8 Wednesday Night Market - set up @ 3:30	9	10	11
12	13 Veterans & Family Advisory Comm.	14 Board Mtg. 1pm	15 Wednesday Night Market - set up @ 3:30	16	17	18 Rose Parade 9:00-2:30
19	20	21 Town Hall Meeting with VA at Vets Bldg. No General	22 Wednesday Night Market - set up @ 3:30	23 Food Distribution	24	25
26 Annual Motorcycle Run	27 Memorial Day Avenue of Flage—set up at 6am/take down at 3pm	28	29 Wednesday Night Market - set up @ 3:30	30		

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“I’ve heard from veterans across my district who are suffering from long-term illnesses as a result of Agent Orange exposure but can’t receive VA benefits for their ailments. I believe we owe these men and women who served our country much-needed assistance for medical bills and other essentials. This legislation is a bipartisan solution to an imminent need, and I’m grateful for my colleagues on both sides of the aisle who have put party differences aside to assist veterans,” **Westerman said.**

“Congress’s most solemn obligation is to ensure that our nation’s veterans have the care and resources they need. American heroes affected by Agent Orange deserve the peace of mind knowing that the federal government recognizes the existing link between their exposure and illness. I am proud to support this bipartisan legislation to ensure that those who defended our freedom receive the health care to which they have earned,” **Fitzpatrick said.**

“Congress has a responsibility to ensure all veterans receive the benefits they are entitled to. VA benefits for thousands of veterans and their children who suffered from detrimental health side effects due to herbicidal agent exposure during the Vietnam War are long overdue. There is sufficient data regarding the locations of Agent Orange storage in Thailand and elsewhere during the war and I am happy to see action taken to compensate our veterans and their families,” **Tipton said.**

“Lowcountry veterans who bravely served their country during Vietnam are now suffering debilitating and long-term illnesses because of their exposure to Agent Orange under the government’s watch. This bipartisan legislation would make sure the men and women exposed to these harmful chemicals receive the care, services, and benefits they are owed. I am proud to work with my colleagues across the aisle to advance this important legislation and ensure our veterans receive the treatment they deserve,” **Cunningham said.**

“This long-awaited administrative step would help tens of thousands of veterans get access to the care they need and deserve. We made a promise to our veterans: they served this country, and in return, we’d always have their backs. This bipartisan legislation makes good on that promise by ensuring all service members exposed to these herbicides and chemicals as a part of their military service get the health care they need. Not one more service member should be forced to suffer in this way without the best care our federal government has to offer,” **Boyle said.**

“I’m proud to introduce this bipartisan bill to ensure veterans suffering because of exposure to Agent Orange can access the medical care and other assistance that they need and that they deserve,” **Thompson said.**

U.S. Air Force records show that at least 6,542 spraying missions took place, and by 1971, the U.S. had sprayed 12 percent of the total area of South Vietnam with the defoliating chemicals, at an average concentration of 13 times the recommended rate for domestic use.

The nine new classifications included in the *Keeping Our Promises Act* are based on NAM’s biennial Veterans and Agent Orange (VAO) Committee’s evaluation of epidemiologic literature and reflect the committee members’ judgement of the relative certainty of the association between the illness and exposure to the herbicides used in Vietnam.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 10, 2019

CONTACT

Nick Brown, 202-597-1894

Kuster Helps Introduce Legislation Benefitting Vietnam-Era Veterans

(Washington, DC) – Today, Congresswoman Annie Kuster (NH-02) joined Representatives Bruce Westerman (R-Ark.), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-Penn.), Scott Tipton (R-Colo.), Elise Stefanik (R-N.Y.), Joe Cunningham (D-S.C.), Brendan Boyle (D-Penn.) and Mike Thompson (D-Calif.) to introduce the *Keeping Our Promises Act*, a bill that would add nine medical conditions recognized by the National Academy of Medicine (NAM) as having evidence of exposure to certain herbicides used by the Armed Forces during the Vietnam War.

Military personnel involved with the storage and transportation suffered severe rates of exposure to this chemical. Despite constant reassurance that it was safe and harmless to handle during the war, veterans began reporting symptoms of lymphoma, leukemia, respiratory cancer, prostate cancer, bladder cancer, digestive disorders and other diseases.

“Too many veterans have faced challenges in accessing the care they need for exposure to toxic chemicals during their service,” **said Kuster.** “This is unacceptable. Thousands of U.S. service members were exposed to Agent Orange during the Vietnam War and for too long they have been denied the support they deserve. I’m pleased to join my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to introduce this much-needed legislation and I will continue my work to help ensure all our service members receive the benefits they have earned.”

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VA to Announce Decision on New Agent Orange Presumptive Conditions

26 Mar 2019
Military.com | By [Patricia Kime](#)

Several years after a scientific body recommended that the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) consider adding four conditions -- bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, hypertension and Parkinson's-like symptoms -- to the list of qualifying diseases tied to [Agent Orange](#), affected veterans may soon find out whether they are eligible for disability compensation and VA health care.

During a Senate Veterans Affairs hearing Tuesday on the VA budget, Dr. Richard Stone, the executive in charge of the Veterans Health Administration, said a decision on the three illnesses likely would come in the next 90 days.

Responding to a question from Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, Stone said the VA is working "through this right now, and it would be my hope" to have a decision within three months. He added that the recommendation will go to VA Secretary Robert Wilkie for final approval. "It's took this country far too long to come to terms with Agent Orange," Brown said.
Related content:

In March 2016, the National Academy of Medicine found evidence that two conditions, bladder cancer and hypothyroidism, are likely linked to Agent Orange exposure and that a third condition, Parkinson-like symptoms, also should be included on the list of diseases presumed to be related to contact with the herbicide.

The announcement brought hope to thousands of veterans living with bladder cancer and thyroid problems, as well as those who have essential tremors and other symptoms similar to Parkinson's, but who haven't been diagnosed with the disease.

In late 2017, former VA Secretary Dr. David Shulkin said he had made a decision on whether to add the three conditions to the list of 14 Agent Orange-related illnesses, but it was never announced. In November 2018, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine also released a report finding sufficient evidence to link high blood pressure with exposure to Agent Orange. High blood pressure, or hypertension, previously had been designated as having limited or suggestive evidence that it is related to contact with Agent Orange. A National Academies committee, having reviewed new studies, upgraded the association to say there is "sufficient" evidence that ties the disease to exposure.

But high blood pressure is so common among older Americans that it has never been added to the presumptive list, even though the suggested evidence shows it may be tied to exposure. The U.S. military sprayed millions of gallons of herbicides, including Agent Orange, in Vietnam to clear the jungle of foliage that obscured enemy movements. More than 2.7 million veterans served in Vietnam. Veterans with health conditions connected to serving on the ground in Vietnam and inland waterways are eligible for health care and compensation from the VA. A [legal decision announced in January](#) by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit may extend those benefits to sailors and [Marines](#) who have qualifying diseases and were assigned to ships offshore.

The VA announced [Thursday it will not appeal the decision](#) by a federal judge to award benefits to the veterans, known as the Blue Water Navy.
-- Editor's Note: This story has been updated to list the four conditions under consideration.
-- Patricia Kime can be reached at Patricia.Kime@Military.com. Follow her on Twitter at [@patriciakime](#).


THE WALL THAT HEALS
By Joe Chowela
Recently, some members of Vietnam Veterans Chapter 223, spent several days participating in the presentation of the ¾ size Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall at a Windsor Soccer complex. This is the only one that is funded by the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Fund and is an exact replica of the one in Washington DC – including all errors. The wall was sponsored by the Russian River VFW and was on display from the evening of March 27th through the afternoon of March 31st. They had requested the Huey from the Pacific Coast Air Museum. Bob George, Tony Rambonga, Bruce Carpenter and I, all members of both the air museum and VVA Chapter 223, pulled double duty displaying the Huey and greeting thousands of visitors. We helped explain the meaning of the memorial to Vietnam veterans and the significance of the Huey to us. The farthest "local" visitors were from the Sacramento Area and we had several out of state visitors that were vacationing and included this display in their plans. We met many former co-workers and Vietnam veteran friends and made scores of new ones. We got coverage from air museum volunteers, so we could attend the annual BBQ. The wall with a staff of 4, rotates from their homes or Washington, DC work location to attend to the wall at the various locations though out the season. The truck driver, a Marine, owns his rig and this year is moving the wall six weeks t

Continued from page 6

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this Spring, and 10 weeks this Fall. He does this all on his own dime, fuel, hours and truck maintenance. He also hauls several loads of Christmas Wreaths from Maine to Arlington National Cemetery each December! Next time when volunteer opportunities present themselves: please consider jumping in and helping out. A little or a lot, you'll find it very rewarding.

Hosted by
the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 223



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