

VVA CHAPTER 1069 BENEFITS PRESENTATION 5/11/2016

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1. CONTACTS:

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- Vanessa Hicks-Callaway (Congressman Blake Farenthold's Veteran Advocate in Victoria), (361) 894-6446. Her e-mail is Vanessa.Hicks-Callaway@mail.house.gov.
- HELP WITH THE VA IS ONLY A CALL AWAY (See page 3 of this handout for more information).

2. IOM UPGRADES PARKINSON'S DISEASE SYMPTOMS AND HYPERTENSION (HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE):

On 3/10/2016, the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) announced that the Institute of Medicine (IOM) was UPGRADING the status of Parkinson's disease symptoms and hypertension (high blood pressure) to the LIMITED/SUGGESTIVE Category of Association. I e-mailed the VVA to ask what LIMITED/SUGGESTIVE meant. The VVA spokesperson e-mailed me to say that the VA Secretary (Robert A. McDonald) has "a six-month window from March 10, 2016, in which to act on the IOM's findings. So, until the Secretary announces his decisions from the IOM's findings, we cannot be sure what will transpire in relation to the AGENT ORANGE PRESUMPTIVE list." Parkinson's disease is a chronic (occurs over a long duration or with frequent recurrence) and progressive MOVEMENT DISORDER. Parkinson's disease involves the malfunction and death of vital nerve cells in the brain. The specific group of symptoms that an individual experiences varies from person to person. Primary MOTOR signs of Parkinson's disease include: TREMOR of the hands, arms, legs, jaw and face; BRADYKINESIA or slowness of movement; RIGIDITY or stiffness of the limbs and trunk; and POSTURAL INSTABILITY or impaired balance and coordination.

3. VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM PRIORITIES GROUPS: The VA administers a patient enrollment system that is based on priority groups to ensure health care benefits are readily available to enrolled veterans. There are eight priority groups with PRIORITY GROUP TWO being the second highest priority (Veterans with VA-rated service connected disabilities of 30% or 40% disabling). On the back of this page is some benefits for Priorities ONE and TWO. I will discuss other Priority Groups in the coming months.

4. POTPOURRI OF INFORMATION:

- (A) One of the very first things I recommended to you back in 2013 was to check your RATING DECISION LETTER to be sure you are being paid for your dependent(s) IF you are rated 30% or more disabled. "WE ARE PAYING YOU AS A VETERAN WITH ONE DEPENDENT(s)." You need to **READ EVERY VA LETTER YOU GET!!**
- (B) ON 10/14/2015, I recommended you take your RATING DECISION LETTER to a Veteran Service Officer (VSO) to have the VSO review a section in the letter titled "ARE YOU ENTITLED TO ADDITIONAL BENEFITS?" as well as review any TEXAS state benefits you may be entitled to due to your disability rating.
- (C) In Wharton County, there are 433 veterans receiving VA disability compensation or pensions from the VA. Of these 129 are 10-20%, 64 are 30-40%, 52 are 50-60%, 99 are 70-90% and 42 are 100%. Forty-seven receive a veterans pension (VVA 10/8/2014).