

## VVA CHAPTER 1069 BENEFITS PRESENTATION - 4/11/18 PAGE 1

### 1. CONTACTS: To help you obtain information about claims or other needs:

- **Veterans Crisis Line:** Veterans and loved ones can call (800) 273-8255 24/7 and then press 1 with total anonymity to speak to a professional counselor. A Houston Vet Center counselor, James Bailey, is available in Dwight Winkler's office on Thursdays for veterans and their families. Call Dwight's office at (979) 532-1311 for an appointment to see James Bailey.
- **Dwight Winkler:** (Interim Wharton County Veterans Service Officer) 1017 N. Alabama Road, Wharton, TX 77488; (979) 532-1311; [dwight.winkler@co.wharton.tx.us](mailto:dwight.winkler@co.wharton.tx.us), OFFICE HOURS: MON, TUES, THUR (Wharton), 8:00a.m.-11:30 & 12:00 noon-4:30 p.m.; FRI (Wharton), 8:00a.m.-11:30 noon by appointment only & 12:00 noon-4:30 p.m. (Administrative time), On WED (El Campo library), 9:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Mike Harbaugh is at the Wharton office on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:00 am till 4:30 pm and lunch from 12:00 noon till 12:30 pm.
- **Vanessa Hicks-Callaway:** (Congressman Blake Farenthold's Veteran Advocate), (361) 894-6446, [Vanessa.Hicks-Callaway@mail.house.gov](mailto:Vanessa.Hicks-Callaway@mail.house.gov). NOTE: Vanessa Hicks-Callaway will work with you on any other government agency.
- **Matt Minor:** (Texas State Representative Phil Stephenson's Veteran Advocate), (281) 232-7900, [Matt.Minor@house.state.tx.us](mailto:Matt.Minor@house.state.tx.us)
- **VA Complaint Hotline:** The new VA complaint hotline number is (855) 948-2311. Be courteous and be able to answer WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, and WHY about "wrong doing at the VA". WHITE HOUSE VA HOTLINE!!!
- **New VA Phone Number to call:** 1-844-698-2311 - This new national toll-free number is a go to source for Veterans and their families who do not know what number to call at the VA. It is identified at the VA as myVA311.
- **Texas Veterans Commission (TVC):** To check on a claim when the TVC is your representative for the claim you have submitted call (713) 383-2756, prompt 1.

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**2. WHARTON COUNTY YOUTH FAIR VETERAN'S DAY:** Veteran's Day at the Wharton County Youth Fair will be held Tuesday, April 24th and all veterans and their immediate family will be allowed free entrance to the grounds. Please present military identification at the main gate and sign your name on the sign-in sheet. The Fair encourages everyone to come enjoy the day at the Fair and then join the Fair during Opening Ceremonies prior to the start of the bull riding, in the Johnson Arena for special recognition. (Source: Wharton County Youth Fair)

**3. FREE LEGAL AID:** There is free legal aid at the Wharton County Library one day a month. It is the first Thursday of the month. Please call (979) 849-6464 for additional information. The next few dates are May 3, June 7, July 5, August 2, and September 6, 2018.

**4. PAYMENT DATES 2018:** VA compensation benefits are paid one month in arrears. This means that benefits for a particular month are paid the first business day of the next month. When the first business day of the month falls on a non-business day or a holiday, VA benefits will be distributed on the last business day prior to the first of the month.

- April 2018 will be paid on May 1, 2018
- May 2018 will be paid on June 1, 2018
- June 2018 will be paid on June 29, 2018
- July 2018 will be paid on August 1, 2018
- August 2018 will be paid on August 31, 2018
- September 2018 will be paid on October 1, 2018
- October 2018 will be paid November 1, 2018
- November 2018 will be paid November 30, 2018
- December 2018 will be paid December 31, 2018

**5. NEW MEDICARE CARD RECEIPT:** The Chapter was informed in June 2017 that new Medicare cards would be arriving this month.

**6. THE VVA VETERAN MARCH/APRIL 2018:** This issue had some interesting information. Page 14 under Agent Orange & Dioxin stated "still waiting for VA Secretary Shulkin (fired by Pres. Trump) to determine presumptions based on March 10, 2016, IOM report. VVA continues to remind the Secretary that this needs to be done." Page 14 next paragraph, AO/Dioxin Children's Registry, We (VVA) have worked closely with this registry in getting more Vietnam veterans' children registered and in gaining evidence of conditions due to a Veteran's exposure to toxins. At the town hall meetings (including the one in Victoria, 2017), VA Form 21-0304 has been provided for the children and grandchildren of Vietnam veterans to file with the VA. The form will go to a Regional Office and will be denied. Then it will be archived with the VA. As the VA moves forward with S.901, which was passed for the children and is now law, the VA will...

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**6. THE VVA VETERAN MARCH/APRIL 2018 (Continued):** ...deal with these claims. Page 20 under Veterans Benefits, third column, VB-11, "The VA claims process is progressing toward fully digitized records. Although there are still paper claims files, the VA claims most have been scanned, and nearly all claims are now processed without paper." Finally, pages 31-33 is a very comprehensive but yet very short documentation of the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam. The two statements that I was amazed at: (1) Page 31, last sentence in middle column, "Burning increases the dioxin toxicity of the herbicides by 25%." (2) On page 33, first column, under "No Evidence", Dr. F. Tschirley had gone to Vietnam in 1968 and reported "There is no evidence to suggest that the herbicides used in Vietnam will cause toxicity problems for man or animals."

**7. GOT A VA RATING? FREE LIFETIME NATIONAL PARKS PASS:** A little known benefit from the Interior Department gives military veterans with ANY disability rating from the Department of Veterans Affairs a free lifetime pass to national parks and other recreational areas, as well as discounts on some fees. "If a Veteran has a disability rating that states they have a 10 percent rating or higher, a ranger at a national park would accept it." In Texas there are 16 sites to visit. They are part of the 400 plus parks/sites in the United States National Park Service. There are two National Parks-Big Bend and Guadalupe Mountains in Texas. There are 14 other national monuments, recreation areas, preserves, memorials, historic trails, historic sites, seashores, and wild and scenic rivers. Entrance fees range from \$4 to \$25.

**8. COURT RULES CHRONIC PAIN IS A VA DISABILITY:** On April 3, 2018, the U. S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims ruled that pain, without any underlying disability, may be a valid reason for awarding VA compensation benefits. The ruling is a result of a Gulf War Veteran who served in the Army from 1987-1994. The Veteran suffered a knee injury while in the service and was treated by military doctors and diagnosed with "patellofemoral pain syndrome," also known as "knee pain." The Veteran filed a claim and after a long period of time was denied. The VA said "that patellofemoral pain syndrome is productive of no ascertainable impairment." This means that the Veteran's injury, while it was painful, was not an impairment, and therefore not a disability.

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### 9. PROFILE OF VIETNAM VETERANS (Includes both, boots on the ground, and Vietnam era)

The following information was prepared by the National Center for Veteran Analysis and Statistics and was released on March 22, 2018. In July 2017, the National Center for Veteran Analysis and Statistics (NCVAS) published a profile that provides a statistical overview of the demographics and socioeconomic characteristics of the Vietnam Era Veteran.

1. As of 2015, there were 6,436,529 Vietnam War Veterans. Sixty-nine percent are not in the labor force while 28 percent are still at work. Their median age is 68 years.
2. Social security is the most common source of income for Vietnam Veterans with 4.8 million or 74% receiving social security with the average being \$12,222 and the median being \$13,300.
3. Forty-five percent of Vietnam Veterans receive a retirement income, which includes survivor and disability pensions. There are 2 million Veterans who earn wages and salaries which include commissions, bonuses or tips. The average salary/wages is \$16,406 with the range being from \$0 to \$658,000. Thirty-one percent of Vietnam Veterans earn a wage or salary.
4. Ninety-nine percent of Vietnam Veterans have some form of public or private insurance coverage. Fifty-four percent have both and one percent has neither. Medicare is the most common form of public insurance coverage. Seventy-six percent of Vietnam Veterans are covered by Medicare.
5. Twenty-two percent of Vietnam Veterans claim a service-connected disability. Of the 22%, seventeen percent have used or are enrolled for VA health care. Five percent do not use the VA healthcare system. Difficulty walking and hearing are the most common disabilities among Vietnam Veterans.
6. For Fiscal Year 2016 (October 1, 2015-September 30, 2016), there were 440 Veterans in Wharton County receiving disability compensation from the VA. One hundred thirty-three were rated 0-20%, 76 were 30-40%, 70 were 50-60%. 102 were 70-90% and 59 were 100%.