

**\*\*\* REPORT FOR ALL TEXAS VVA MEMBERSHIP \*\*\***

Updated 3/7/2016

## **Texas Coalition of Veterans Organizations (TCVO) Legislative Priorities for the 85<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature**

- Hazlewood Education Act: Opponents of the Hazlewood Act are targeting to significantly change the eligibility for access to Hazlewood, limit the time that the benefits can be used, and significantly reduce the credit hours for degree completion. Protect the education benefits earned by Texas military Veterans for themselves and for their families!
- Property Tax Relief for Veterans Disabled Less Than 100%: proposes to change the set dollar amounts for four levels of VA disability ratings to a percentage figure. The proposed % figures would be used to determine the annual property tax exemption dollar reduction when compared to the average appraised value of a principal residence in Texas.
- Military absentee voting: If military absentee ballots go out late by any time frame (eg: hours or days), the grace period will increase to eight (8) days to allow military absentee voters extra time to return the absentee ballot to the local clerk's office to compensate for the late shipment and subsequent receipt from local election offices.

## **114<sup>th</sup> US Congress: Major Veteran Related Bills: TCVO Top Priority Bills Shown Below...**

***Bills related to: Exposure to Toxins, i.e. Agent Orange & Burn Pits...***

### **H.R.969: Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act**

A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify presumptions relating to the exposure of certain veterans who served in the vicinity of the Republic of Vietnam, and for other purposes.

**Sponsor:** Rep Gibson, Christopher P. [NY-19] (introduced 2/13/2015)

**Related Bills:** S.681 (see following Bill)

**305 Co-Sponsors:** 21 from Texas

**Committees:** House Veterans' Affairs

**Latest Major Action:** 2/13/2015 Referred to House committee.

**Status:** Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. 3/6/2015: Referred to Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs.

### **S.681: Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2015**

A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify presumptions relating to the exposure of certain veterans who served in the vicinity of the Republic of Vietnam, and for other purposes.

**Sponsor:** Sen Gillibrand, Kirsten E. [NY] (introduced 3/9/2015)

**Related Bills:** H.R.969 (see previous Bill)

**39 Co-Sponsors:** none from Texas

**Committees:** Senate Veterans' Affairs

**Latest Major Action:** 3/9/2015 Referred to Senate committee.

**Status:** Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. 5/13/2015: Committee on Veterans Affairs hearing held.

### **H.R.1769: Toxic Exposure Research Act of 2015**

A bill to establish in the Department of Veterans Affairs a national center for research on the diagnosis and treatment of health conditions of the descendants of veterans exposed to toxic substances during service in the Armed Forces that are related to that exposure, to establish an advisory board on such health conditions, and for other purposes.

**Sponsor:** Rep Benishek, Dan [MI-1] (introduced 4/14/2015)

**Related Bills:** S.901 (see following Bill)

**179 Co-Sponsors:** 5 from Texas: Beto O'Rourke (D-TX-16), Lamar Smith (R-TX-21); Lloyd Doggett (D-TX-35); Filemon Vela (D-TX-34); Ted Poe (T-TX-2)

**Committees:** House Veterans' Affairs; House Armed Services

**Latest Major Action:** 4/14/2015 Introduced in House.

**Status:** 8/13/2015: referred to Subcommittee on Military Personnel for Committee consideration. 02/25/2016 Ordered to be reported in the Nature of a Substitute (Amended) by Voice Vote.

House Veterans Affairs Committee mark-up held on 4/25/2016 to amend and advance legislation. HR 1769 will be reported to the full House for debate and passage on the House floor.

### **S.901: Toxic Exposure Research Act of 2015**

A bill to establish in the Department of Veterans Affairs a national center for research on the diagnosis and treatment of health conditions of the descendants of veterans exposed to toxic substances during service in the Armed Forces that are related to that exposure, to establish an advisory board on such health conditions, and for other purposes.

**Sponsor:** Sen Moran, Jerry [KS] (introduced 4/13/2015)

**Related Bills:** H.R.1769 (see previous Bill)

**40 Co-sponsors:** none from Texas

**Committees:** Senate Veterans' Affairs

**Latest Major Action:** 4/13/2015 Referred to Senate committee. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. 6/24/2015: Hearings held; no other action reported.

### **H.R.2237: Helping Veterans Exposed to Burn Pits Act**

A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans to establish within the Department of Veterans Affairs a center of excellence in the prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, treatment, and rehabilitation of health conditions relating to exposure to burn pits.

**Sponsor:** Rep Esty, Elizabeth H. [CT-5] (introduced 5/5/2015)

**12 Co-Sponsors:** one from Texas: Henry Cuellar (D-TX-28)

**Committees:** House Veterans' Affairs; House Armed Services

**Latest Major Action:** 5/5/2015 Referred to House committee.

**Status:** Referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and in addition to the Committee on Armed Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

8/13/2015: referred to Subcommittee on Military Personnel for Committee Consideration.

### ***Bills related to: Mesothelioma...***

#### **HR 526: Furthering Asbestos Claim Transparency Act (FACT) of 2015**

Amends federal bankruptcy law concerning a trust formed under a reorganization plan following the discharge in bankruptcy of a debtor corporation in order to assume the debtor's liability with respect to claims seeking recovery for personal injury, wrongful death, or property damage allegedly caused by the presence of, or exposure to, asbestos or asbestos-containing products. Requires such a trust to file with the bankruptcy court quarterly reports, available on the public docket, which describes each demand the trust has received from a claimant and the basis for any payment made to that claimant (excluding any confidential medical record or the claimant's full Social Security number). Requires such reports, upon written request, and subject to payment (demanded at the option of the trust) for any reasonable cost incurred by it, to provide any information related to payment from, and demands for payment from, the trust to any party to any action in law or equity concerning liability for asbestos exposure.

**Sponsor:** Rep Blake Farenthold (R-TX-27). Introduced in the House 1/26/2015. 3 Co-Sponsors

**Committees:** House Judiciary

**Latest Major Action:** reported by the Committee on the Judiciary 11/30/2015; placed on the Union Calendar No. 271.

#### **S.357: Furthering Asbestos Claim Transparency Act of 2015 or FACT Act**

Amends federal bankruptcy law concerning a trust formed under a reorganization plan following the discharge in bankruptcy of a debtor corporation in order to assume the debtor's liability with respect to claims seeking recovery for personal injury, wrongful death, or property damage allegedly caused by the presence of, or exposure to, asbestos or asbestos-containing products. Requires such a trust to file with the bankruptcy court quarterly reports, available on the public docket, which describes each demand the trust has received from a claimant and the basis for any payment made to that claimant (excluding any confidential medical record or the claimant's full Social Security number). Requires such reports, upon written request, and subject to payment (demanded at the option of the trust) for any reasonable cost incurred by it, to provide any information related to payment from, and demands for payment from, the trust to any party to any action in law or equity concerning liability for asbestos exposure.

**Sponsor:** Jeff Flake (R-AZ). Introduced in the Senate 2/4/2015, 2 Co-Sponsors: one from

Texas: John Cornyn (R-TX)

**Committees:** Judiciary

**Latest Major Action:** 2/4/2015 read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary.

2/3/2016: Committee on the Judiciary hearing held; action: Committee consideration, action by Senate Judiciary.

***Bills related to: Recognition of Vietnam War Dust-Off Crews...***

**S.2268: Dust-Off Crews of the Vietnam War Congressional Gold Medal Act**

A bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the United States Army Dust Off crews of the Vietnam War, collectively, in recognition of their extraordinary heroism and life-saving actions in Vietnam.

**Sponsor:** Sen Cornyn, John [TX] (introduced 11/10/2015)

**6 Co-Sponsors:** Senators Joe Manchin (D-WV); Jerry Moran (R-KS), Pat Toomey (R-PA), Tom Colton (R-AR), Johnny Isakson (R-GA), John Boozman (R-AR)

**Committees:** Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

**Latest Major Action:** 11/10/2015 Referred to Senate committee. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

Above report from: **John A Miterko, Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA)**

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