



Western New York Chapter 77

Tonawanda, New York

Mail Call:

January - March 2020

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Mike Walker

The holidays are behind us now. I hope the holidays were good for all.

Things at the chapter are going well. We still get together on Wednesday and Saturday from 9 to 1. Stop down and have a donut and coffee.

The members of our AVVA was busy. The last couple of months they have been working on gifts for the children of vets that are receiving help from our food pantry and gifts for the veterans who are in Willow Lodge.

In January we should set up an election committee to oversee our elections in April. We should have 3 members in the committee. They will get the notification from the members that want to run, set up the ballots and count the votes on election night. The officers and the board will explain how it's to be done. Only members who are not going to run for a position can be on it.

In January we will have our spaghetti diner for the Tyze scholarship fund. We will need help with that.

For those that where not at the meeting in November I gave an update on the National Cemetery in Pembroke. The latest is the first interment will happen November 2020.



VETERANS DAY

Tom Konopka was the keynote speaker at the Veterans Day breakfast in North Tonawanda. Due to the weather that day we decided to cancel our program which was scheduled for 3pm at the Helicopter Monument.



VVA CHAPTER 77 LEADERSHIP

(Terms of office are from April 2018 to April 2020)

OFFICERS

President	Mike Walker	693-4479
1st Vice President	Ed Bodine	693-4479
2nd Vice President	Tom Konopka	693-4479
Secretary	Joe Rajnisz	693-4479
Treasurer	Paul Pietrowski	693-4479
Service Officer	Dee Garcia NYS Council	

DIRECTORS

Dan Brady	693-4479	Dennis Jorden	693-4479
Peter Divergillo	693-4479	Dale Zdrojewski	693-4479
John Heffernan	693-4479	Bill Paton	693-4479
Lee Chase	693-4479	Joe Pasek	693-4479
Tom Thompson	693-4479	Tim Huges	693-4479

SPECIAL DUTIES

NY State VVA	Ed Bodine	Bill Paton
Council Delegates	Paul Pietrowski (Alternate)	Tom Konopka (Alternate)
Newsletter Editor	Mike Walker	

STANDING COMMITTEES

Agent Orange / Veterans Affairs	Joe Pasek	693-4479
	Bill Paton	
Color Guard	Paul Pietrowski	693-4479
Community Affairs	Paul Pietrowski	693-4479
Constitution Committee	Lee Chase	693-4479
Scholarship	John Heffernan	693-4479
Employment Training & Business Training	Tom Konopka	694-0857
Golf Tournament	Al Schreier	694-3441
Government Affairs	Al Brusetti	693-4479
Web Master	Mike Walker	693-4479
Membership	Mike Walker	693-4479
	Paul Pietrowski	693-4479
Museum Curator	Paul Pietrowski	693-4479
POW/MIA Affairs	Paul Pietrowski	693-4479
PTSD		
Public Affairs	Patrick Welch	693-4479
Nominating Committee		
Veterans Benefits	Tom Konopka	693-4479
VA Hospital Reps.	Tom Konopka	693-4479
	Ed Bodine	693-4479

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JANUARY 16

BOD MEETING AT 6PM MEMBERSHIP MEETING 7PM PIZZA AFTER THE MEETING

JANUARY 23

PETER TYCZ SCHOLARSHIP SPAGHETTI DINNER 4-7 PM TONAWANDA SENIOR CENTER ON MAIN ST. BASKETS NEEDED FOR OUR RAFFLE

FEBRUARY 15

SNOWFLAKE BALL BY MAYOR PAPPAS OF NORTH TONAWANDA, 8-11PM KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS 755 ERIE AVE. N. TONAWANDA. 50.00 EA , 90.00 COUPLE PROCEEDS GO TO OUR CHAPTER

FEBRUARY 20

BOD MEETING 6PM MEMBERSHIP MEETING 7PM PIZZA AFTER THE MEETING

MARCH 19

BOD MEETING 6PM MEMBERSHIP MEETING 7PM PIZZA AFTER THE MEETING

APRIL 4

APRIL FOOLS DANCE SIKORA POST 7-11PM "CRASH CADILLAC"

APRIL 16

BOD MEETING 6PM MEMBERSHIP MEETING 7PM PIZZA AFTER THE MEETING

AVVA NOTES

By Lori Paton

The AVVA had a very busy holiday season. We appreciate the many donations that came into the food pantry. We also had several new clients sign up as well.

We made our annual visits to the VA hospital. On December 5, we brought 20 handmade blankets and gift bags to the Willow Lodge nursing home and on December 16th, we donated 60 gift bags for hospitalized vets. Many thanks to all who donated to this event.

This year, the AVVA assisted 19 families with Christmas presents for their children and grandchildren. A total of 48 children received gifts or gift cards. A big thank you to all who donated especially St. Amelia's, Lee Chase, The Horn family, and Mike Walker.

We look forward to another year of working with our vets and their families and would like to wish all a very happy and healthy New year.

FACTS AND FIGURES, YOU SHOULD KNOW

Since 1986 Paul Rudnicki and VALOR have raised \$390,144.72 for our food pantry.

Joe Pasek and the "Orange Blossom Gang" raised \$8402.50 last year.

Peter Tycz Scholarship have awarded 410 scholarships for a total of \$102,250.00, thank you John Heffernan for all of your work picking the winners.



Tom Thompson President of Pendleton Veterans Presenting a plaque to Chapter 77 for our donation to the Pendleton Vets memorial.

TAPS

The following members have answered final roll call, please keep their families in your thoughts and prayers

Denner Astyk
David Beck
Albert Burget
Edward Briele
Joseph Calabrese
John Dolhon
Dennis Eggers
James Jaeger
David Meyer
Paul Miga
Dennis Pasiak
Eric Reimer

May they Rest in Peace

SNOW FLAKE BALL

Mayor Pappas of North Tonawanda has a fund raiser every year to benefit a charity or organization in North Tonawanda. This year VVA Chapter 77 will benefit from the proceeds of the ball. Tickets are 50.00 each or 90.00 couple. We could receive at least 7000.00 from the ball. Everyone is welcome, more info will be out in an email and facebook.



VVA Christmas party at Sikora Post, we 113 members and guests attend.

CONTACTS FOR VETS

E-Benefits Portal Site

<https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits-portal/ebenefits.portal>

Enrollment/Eligibility

<http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility>

Health Resource Center

1-877-222-8387 (VETS)

OEF / OIF

<http://www.oefoif.va.gov>

Women Veterans

<http://www.va.gov/womenvet>

Benefits Line: 1-855-829-6636

Dental Care

http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/resources/publications/IB10-442_dental_benefits_for_veterans_2_14.pdf

Copays

<http://www1.va.gov/CBO/brochures.asp>

Health Resource Center

1-877-222-8387

Suicide Prevention Hotline

1-800-273-8255 (TALK)

Prosthetics

<http://www.prosthetics.va.gov>

My HealtheVet

<http://www.myhealth.va.gov>

Homeless Veterans Hotline

1-877-424-3838

SO WE WAIT

By Patricia Kime

Democrats on the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee have written the Office of Management and Budget urging the department to stop obstructing a Department of Veterans Affairs' decision to include new diseases on a list of conditions presumed linked to Agent Orange.

The move follows a Military Times report in October that OMB and its director, Mick Mulvaney, are responsible for delaying a decision to designate bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinson's-like symptoms as presumptive conditions by challenging scientific evidence and recommendations by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine.

According to documents obtained by a veteran through the Freedom of Information Act, former VA Secretary Dr. David Shulkin had decided in 2017 to add the conditions to those presumed related to Agent Orange exposure. But OMB and White House advisers challenged his decision.

Pentagon & Congress

White House responsible for delayed decision on new Agent Orange diseases, documents show

By: Patricia Kime October 23



Marines on patrol in Vietnam in March 1967. James Stogner, the fourth Marine in the patrol, was awarded the Navy Cross for heroism during the Vietnam War. (Courtesy photo)

Five senators, led by Montana Democrat Jon Tester, the committee's ranking member, wrote Mulvaney on Oct. 31 asking OMB to "stop blocking" the decision on the three conditions. They also included hypertension, which was found in a 2018 National Academies report to also have "sufficient evidence of association" to defoliants used during the Vietnam War.

"We are frustrated that previous letters addressed directly to you have gone unanswered," wrote Tester, Sen. Mazie Hirono of Hawaii, Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, Sen. Sherrod Brown of Ohio and Sen. Bernie Sanders, who is an Independent but votes with the Democratic bloc.

"Frankly, you need to do your job," they wrote.

More than 83,000 Vietnam veterans with bladder cancer, hypothyroidism or Parkinson's symptoms would be eligible for disability compensation and health care if their conditions are included on the list of presumptive conditions.

Hundreds of thousands of Vietnam veterans also suffer from hypertension, or high blood pressure. If it is added to the list of 14 conditions, it has the potential to cost VA billions in care.

The senators told Mulvaney to "stop denying the overwhelming scientific evidence provided to you by countless veterans and medical experts."

"No more excuses. Stop turning your backs on the thousands of Vietnam-era veterans across the country who are suffering – and dying – from significant health conditions directly associated with their service to our nation and their exposure to toxic herbicides."

The letter follows statements last month by other senators, including Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., and Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., and veterans service organizations condemning the delay.

Veterans of Foreign Wars National Commander William Schmitz said Oct. 23 the organization was upset by "the backdoor political games ... being played in D.C. as the lives of our veterans are at stake."

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VA EXTENDS BENEFITS TO OFFSHORE BLUE WATER NAVY VIETNAM VETERANS JANUARY 1ST

Law also affects survivors of Veterans, certain dependents and Veteran homebuyers

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) begins deciding Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019 claims, Jan. 1, 2020, extending the presumption of herbicide exposure that include toxins such as Agent Orange, to Veterans who served in the offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam War.

Prior to the measure, only Vietnam War Veterans who served on the ground in Vietnam or within Vietnam's inland waterways were eligible to receive disability compensation and other benefits based on a presumption of herbicide exposure.

Signed into law June 25, the law specifically affects Blue Water Navy (BWN) Veterans who served as far as 12 nautical miles offshore of the Republic of Vietnam between Jan. 6, 1962 and May 7, 1975, as well as Veterans who served in the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between Jan. 1, 1967 and Aug. 31, 1971. These Veterans can apply for disability compensation and other benefits if they have since developed one of 14 conditions that are presumed to be related to exposure to herbicides such as Agent Orange. Veterans do not need to prove that they were exposed to herbicides. The specific conditions can be found by searching Agent Orange on www.va.gov.

“For six months, VA worked diligently to gather and digitize records from the Naval History and Heritage Command in order to support faster claims decisions,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “These efforts will positively impact the claims process for Veterans filing for these benefits.”

Qualifying recipients, in addition to affected Veterans still living, are certain survivors of deceased BWN and Korean DMZ Veterans.

Survivors can file claims for benefits based on the Veteran's service if the Veteran died from at least one of the 14 presumptive conditions associated with Agent Orange. The law also provides benefits for children born with spina bifida if their parent is or was a Veteran with certain verified service in Thailand during a specific period. The Blue Water Navy Act also includes provisions affecting the VA Home Loan Program. The law creates more access for Veterans to obtain no-down payment home loans, regardless of loan amount, and the home loan funding fee is reduced for eligible Reservists and National Guard borrowers who use their home loan benefits for the first time. Certain Purple Heart recipients do not pay a funding fee at all. VA's website describes these and other benefits.

Veterans who want to file an initial claim for an herbicide-related disability can use VA Form 21-526EZ, Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits or work with a VA-recognized Veterans Service Organization to assist with the application process. Veterans may also contact their state Veterans Affairs Office.

BWN Veterans who previously filed a claim seeking service connection for one of the 14 presumptive conditions that was denied by VA may provide or identify any new and relevant information regarding their claim when reapplying. To re-apply, Veterans may use VA Form 20-0995, Decision Review Request: Supplemental Claim. As a result of the new law, VA will automatically review claims that are currently in the VA review process or under appeal.

For more information about the Blue Water Navy Act and the changes that will take effect visit <https://www.benefits.va.gov/benefits/blue-water-navy.asp>.

90,000 ‘blue water’ Vietnam veterans in line for disability benefits after Justice officials drop appeal

By: Leo Shane III June 4



“The health and welfare of our nation’s veterans should, and must, be our number one priority,” Schmitz said in a release.

Vietnam Veterans of American National President John Rowan was even more blunt: “We hold the [OMB] and its director culpable in the deaths of those Vietnam veterans who went to their graves waiting for their government to do the right thing and grant service-connection for exposure to Agent Orange and other rainbow agents, as recommended by the

VA Secretary based on findings of the Institute of Medicine (the former name of the National Academies of Medicine).”

VA officials have repeatedly told Congress and the media that an announcement on the decision is forthcoming.

On Sept. 25, Dr. Patricia Hastings, VA’s chief consultant for post-deployment health told the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee that “those [presumptives] are still with leadership in coordination for the decisions to be made.”

VA Secretary Robert Wilkie said Sept. 17 that the details were being considered and a decision would be made but he declined to say what the final ruling is or when it will be released.

Congress can legislate additions to the Agent Orange presumptive list. Earlier this year, it passed a law ruling that the VA extend benefits to ill personnel who served on Navy ships off the coast of Vietnam, known as Blue Water Navy veterans.

But the bill passed after a court had ruled VA must pay disability benefits to the estimated 90,000 affected veterans and VA had already dropped its objections to the ruling.

NEWSLETTER BOOSTER FORM

Fill out and submit with a check for \$12 payable to the chapter.

Name: _____ Branch: _____

Unit: _____ Year: _____

Vietnam Veterans of America
WNY Chapter 77
47 Main St.
Tonawanda, NY 14150
Return Service Requested

Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #2
Tonawanda, NY 14150

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Please send this application, with your dues payment and a copy of your DD-214 to: VVA Chapter 77, 47 Main St., Tonawanda, NY 14150

Name _____ Male ___ Female ___ Date of Birth _____
Address _____ e-mail address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Telephone number _____ Sponsor (optional) _____

Life Member: ___ \$50 (Only Membership Available)

Eligibility: Membership is open to U.S. armed forces veterans who served on active duty (for other than training purposes) in the Republic of Vietnam between February 28, 1961 and May 7, 1975, or in any duty location between August 5, 1964 and May 7, 1975. You must submit a copy of your DD-214 with this membership application.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

- ☐ I am a spouse, family member or friend of a Vietnam veteran and would like membership information about the Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America.
- ☐ I would like information on membership for permanently hospitalized Vietnam veterans.
- ☐ I would like information on membership for incarcerated Vietnam veterans.
- ☐ I want to help Vietnam veterans and their families. Please accept my tax-deductible donation: ___\$10 ___\$20 ___\$50 ___Other: \$_____

(VVA is a non-profit, veteran's service organization. Programs and services are funded by member dues and public donations.)