

TOXIC EXPOSURE COMMITTEE REPORT

Nadine Owen and Nancy Switzer, Co-Chairs

OCTOBER 2020

THE CARE GIVER ACT:

A Mission Act Expands Access to Family Caregivers of Veterans Injured in the Line of Duty on or before May 7, 1975.

Eligibility for the *Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers* (PSAFC) is expanding under the new, final regulations, and changes will begin in October. The first phase of expansion will include eligible veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service on or before May 7, 1975. The expansion will occur once VA Secretary Wilke has certified to Congress that the caregiver information technology system is fully implemented.

The memorandum certifying the Caregiver Record Management Application, which supports VA's Program (PCAFC), has been signed by the VA Secretary Wilke and has been certified to Congress that the caregiver information technology system is fully implemented. For more information about the program and the full range of services available to caregivers, visit <https://www.caregiver.va.gov> or contact an accredited service officer today. There also is an on-line application. Please encourage Veterans and their caregivers who may qualify to apply.

CONGRESSMAN NEAL DUNN M.D.'S VETERAN PROSTATE CANCER TREATMENT AND RESEARCH ACT unanimously passed in the House of Representatives.

Prostate cancer is the number one cancer diagnosed in the Veterans Health Administration, with over 489,000 veterans undergoing treatment. The bill will direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a national clinical pathway for prostate cancer, a standardized system of care for the treatment of what is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in the veterans' health system.

“The last thing any veteran should face is yet another enemy – prostate cancer,” said Dr. Dunn. “I’m pleased to see my bill pass today. The key to overcoming prostate cancer is early detection. Veterans deserve a system that streamlines the pathway from early detection to successful treatment. I’m grateful that my colleagues recognized the importance of my bill and have joined me in defeating this deadly adversary.”

Veterans who have been in contact with toxins, such as Agent Orange, are at higher risk for prostate cancer. Establishing a clinical pathway will standardize treatment options and result in improved outcomes for these patients. Additionally, the bill creates a real-time registry to track patient progress and will allow patients greater access to cutting edge clinical trials.

Act Now to Retain Bladder Cancer, Hypothyroidism, and Parkinsonism in the NDAA

The House and Senate Armed Services committees will soon meet to reconcile legislative differences in the House (H.R. 6395) and Senate (S.4049) version of the FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) recently passed in both chambers. Act now to let them know you want them to retain the bipartisan Harder/Tester amendment that would add three

diseases, bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinsonism as service-connected conditions. Please contact your appropriate representative and voice your opinion.

OCTOBER IS AGENT ORANGE AWARENESS MONTH

As we navigate through October, remember that 'October is Agent Orange Awareness Month'. Remember all those who have been affected by the effects of this toxin and honor them by continuing to share and educate others about Agent Orange and its effects, not only to the veteran, but to their children and grandchildren as well. It is through continued research and the sharing of its findings through education that we best serve those who have served, and continue to serve, us. Please go to our web site avva.org, go to Toxic Exposure Committee and download the Awareness poster. **Please share it widely, as we are still fighting for justice for our veterans and our families.**