

## TOXIC EXPOSURE COMMITTEE

### January 2021 quarterly Report

Nadine Owen and Nancy Switzer, Co-Chairs

**Service Connection:** The Senate overrode President Donald Trump's veto of the fiscal 2021 Defense Authorization Bill. The veto override got caught up in political jockeying over \$2,000 economic relief checks to Americans affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

Additional Diseases associated with exposure to certain herbicide agents for which there is a presumption of service connection for Veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam. Section 1116(a) (2) of Title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subparagraphs: (I) Parkinsonism. (J) Bladder cancer. (K) Hypothyroidism.

**CONVID-19:** The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) added 128 locations to those that will provide [COVID-19 vaccinations](#) to its frontline health care workers and veterans residing in long-term care facilities.

Originally, only 37 VA medical centers offered the Pfizer vaccine because it had to be stored at extremely cold temperatures. However, with the authorization of the Moderna vaccine (which only requires regular refrigeration), additional VA medical centers and outpatient clinics are now able to provide vaccinations. So far, the VA has 195 facilities across the country offering vaccinations, and more are being added. (See a list of locations administering vaccines at the bottom of this page.)

As of Jan. 4, 2021, the VA provided vaccines to over 14,000 high-risk veterans and more than 132,000 of its health care workers.

These locations will closely monitor patients and staff for side effects, log the information in a vaccine tracking system and report that data to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Tens of thousands of [caregivers providing critical medical support to disabled veterans](#) will be eligible to receive [coronavirus vaccine](#) doses soon under a new policy announced by the Department of Veterans Affairs this week.

The move comes after a coalition of veterans groups lobbied for the caregivers to be pushed to the top of the vaccine list, arguing that they deserved to be included in the first wave of medical professionals being protected against the deadly illness.

In response, Dr. Richard Stone, executive in charge of the Veterans Health Administration, released a memo this week asserting that individuals registered with the department's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers can be given the vaccine "in a coordinated manner with the veterans for whom they provide care."

## **DIC eligibility for survivors of Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans**

If the VA denied your Blue Water Navy Veteran's service-connected disability claim in the past, you may be eligible for DIC benefits based on the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019.

*See [DIC eligibility information](#) and [how to apply](#).*

Veterans who served on a Blue Water Navy vessel offshore of the Republic of Vietnam, or on another U.S. Navy or Coast Guard ship operating in the coastal waterways of Vietnam between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, are now entitled to a presumption of *service connection for illnesses related to Agent Orange exposure*. This is a result of Public Law 116-23, also known as the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019.



It has been 12 years since we all recognized our children and grandchildren had unwanted health issues related to our veteran being exposed to Agent Orange and other toxins during service. As a group we decided to get answers and provide help for our offspring. This needed research to be paid for by our government.

Working together for years we drew attention to the problem by Agent Orange Town Hall meetings, Faces of Agent Orange stories, and lobbying Congress. We were told in the beginning we would never get a law through Congress. With the help of the Congressional staffers and sponsors, that law was signed by President Obama 4 years ago. We thought our mission was achieved.

With the change in the federal administration the law has not been implemented. The funds have not been used by the VA. Now a new sheriff has moved into the White House. Do we want the law implemented and research to begin? Now new VA leadership has been put in place. Now is the time to insist that research be done.

To make this issue visible again we have bulk ordered Agent Orange cloth face masks. A picture of the mask is on the birthdefects.org website. The second reason for the masks was to have a fundraiser to benefit the Birth Defect Registry which has been financially negatively impacted with the pandemic. We need this registry working for the research data.

The mask sells for \$10.00 each. Sandie Wilson has the supply plus the mailing material. If you order the masks in groups of 10, your wholesale price is \$90 per 10 masks.

President Biden is requesting all Americans to wear a face mask for 100 days. Everyone wanting toxic exposure research for our children should be wearing one of our masks.

To order please contact Sandie Wilson at [sandie.wil@comcast.net](mailto:sandie.wil@comcast.net) or call 734-216-4862. Your check needs to be made out to Birth Defects Research Center and mailed to Sandie Wilson at 8933 moon Road, Saline, Michigan 48176. Please include your mailing address to ship the masks and the amount needed.

Please order the masks and sell them in your area and also please forward this letter to your contacts. This is so important. We thank you for your continued assistance in this matter.

Your truly,

*Nancy S. Switzer and Nadine Owen*