



INCOMING

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA
CHAPTER 535
 Chapter 535 Web Page
www.vva535.org



"It Feels Good to Get Involved"

Volume 23 Issue 4

In Service To America and the Gold Country

April 2013

President's Message

Veterans Claims

You will recall that toward the end of January Congressman Doug LaMalfa and two members of his staff, Jennifer Horne and Jenna Batti, met with several members of our chapter who were encountering difficulties with their VA claims. Jenna attended our chapter meeting on March 7 to follow up. The sense I am getting from our members is they are making progress with Jenna's help. If you need to speak to Jenna, her telephone number is 530-534-7100. Claims from our area are processed through the VA processing center in Oakland. The following report from the Veterans Administration as of February 11, 2013, showing the average number of days disability claims are pending for Oakland compared to the average for all processing centers nationwide demonstrates the need for improvement in Oakland.

Average Days Disability Claims Are Pending

	Oakland	National Average
Rating Workload	448 days	279 days
Original Claims (7 issues or less)	456 days	293 days
Original Claims (8 issues or more)	486 days	290 days
Reopened & Claims for increase	440 days	278 days
Fully Developed Claims	159 days	118 days
Hardship Claims (215 pending)	471 days	310 days
Homeless Claims (220 pending)	299 days	163 days
Non-Rating Workload	364 days	230 days

Pending Disability Claims

Oakland has 31,518 disability claims pending an average of 452 days. Of those, 25,761 (87.9%) have been pending more than 125 days, and 19,678 claims (72.8%) have been pending more than one year.

Oakland has 7,827 disability claims pending initial development. Average days awaiting development is 192.4 days.

Although the VA recommends the best way to file a claim is to file a Fully Developed Claim and register for eBenefits at <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/>, most vets will receive better service presenting their claim through our Veterans Service Office in Grass Valley. The staff at the VSO can help

you determine if you are eligible for a Fully Developed Claim and help track the status of the claim. Jenna Batti's function is to help push your claim along if you are having difficulty getting your claim resolved. If your claim doesn't seem to be progressing, through her contacts in the VA system she can often find out why and get it moving. So, if you have had a claim pending several months and, in some cases years, give Jenna a call.

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"Dave Chaix and Jenna Batti at our March chapter meeting. Jenna is a caseworker with Congressman Doug LaMalfa's office who is assisting veterans resolve their claims with the Veterans Administration."

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Vet Gun Control Update

Senator Feinstein has set off a fire storm of controversy and debate over her remarks at a recent Senate Judiciary Committee meeting that were against expanding the exemption from a gun ban for retired military veterans.

I am a reasonable person and usually can excuse an ignorant statement from an average person because, let's face it, we do not have time to learn all there is to know in this universe. However, when a Senator of the United States makes ignorant remarks concerning policies that would inhibit any of our God given rights in the Bill of Rights I take issue. In a recent Senate Judiciary Committee meeting regarding her proposed gun ban legislation, Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-California) made a statement so ignorant it reminded me of how unimpressive, unprofessional, and dangerous ill-educated people with a high opinion of themselves can be when put into office. If you as a legislator who is entrusted with the future of the United States do not take the time to consider your words and become educated on the topic for which you are addressing you have no business being in your position. Here is the statement that has caused alarm to not only myself but many in the veteran community including vocal and respected veteran's advocates.

“SEN. DIANNE FEINSTEIN: If I understand this, this adds an exemption of retired military. As I understand our bill, no issue has arose in this regard during the 10 years the expired ban was in effect and what we did in the other bill was exempt possession by the United States or a department or agency of the United States. So that included active military.

The problem with expanding this is that, you know, with the advent of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), which I think is a new phenomenon as a product of the Iraq War, it's not clear how the seller or transferrer of a firearm covered by this bill would verify that an individual was a member, or a veteran, and that there was no impairment of that individual with respect to having a weapon like this.

So, you know, I would be happy to sit down with you again and see if we could work something out but I think we have to-- if you're going to do this, find a way that veterans who are incapacitated for one reason or another mentally don't have access to this kind of weapon.”

Her remarks were in response to a proposed amendment that would exempt military veterans from her gun ban legislation. The exemption was supported by Senator John Cornyn (R-Texas).

In response to Feinstein's statement, Shawn J. Gourley a founder of Military with PTSD, issued an open letter that has begun to go viral via social media.

“First of all, Senator Feinstein, PTSD is not a, “new phenomenon as a product of the Iraq War.” It has been called soldier's heart in the Civil War, shell shock in WWI, battle fatigue in WWII, and only most recently, post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD. PTSD made its first appearance in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual Third Edition, which was published in 1980. The doctors who lobbied for its inclusion viewed it as a measure that would finally legitimize the pain and suffering of Vietnam War veterans. However, adding PTSD to the DSM turned out to be an action with more far-reaching effects than just that population; it opened doors for a lot of people who desperately needed help. PTSD is a psychological reaction that occurs after an extremely stressful event involving the threat of injury or death. Anyone can get PTSD at any age. This includes war veterans, police officers, firemen, and survivors of physical and sexual assault, abuse, accidents, disasters, and many other serious events. So as you can see, Senator, with all due respect, PTSD is not exclusive to either veterans in general or specifically veterans of the Iraq War. “

This is only an excerpt and I encourage everyone to read the full letter available on CNN ireport. Shawn's response was professional and tempered considering the ire we all felt when hearing the Senator's comments.

Senator Feinstein missed the meat of many of her points but namely this statement caught my eye.

“it's not clear how the seller or transferrer of a firearm covered by this bill would verify that an individual was a member, or a veteran, and that there was no impairment of that individual with respect to having a weapon like this. “

First of all, there is a very easy way to find out if an individual was a member of the armed forces. It is called a DD-214 and I highly doubt any veteran would be opposed to providing that information to a registered firearms broker if it meant they could get certain guns they wish to own. If Feinstein were serious about this, she would put extra personnel and funding into the National Archives to make DD-214s more quickly accessible or, and this is a wild thought, make sure that information is accessible in any background check which are already required by law to receive a gun. Everything she is worried about is already covered by the National Instant Criminal Background Check System or NICS.

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Chapter 535 Information Center

Chapter 535 Officers & Board of Directors

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Fred Buhler	265-4878
Vice-President	
Pete Burelle	274-3787
Secretary	
Dave Johnson	885-1230
Treasurer	
Harold Graves haroldgraves@sbcglobal.net.....	470-8507

Past President

Kent Hawley.....	432-3551
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Bill Holman bholman@succeed.nett	265-8387
Fred Buhler	265-4878
Kent Hawley.....	432-3551
Dave Johnson	885-1230
Dick Corn.....	272-5922

CA State Council Delegates

Pete Burelle, Fred Buhler (alternate)	265-4878
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Chapter 535 Committees Chairs

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Product Sales	Pete Burelle
Food Sales.....	Jerry Molloy, Dan Davis
Membership Affairs	Margie Buhler
Newsletter ...	bholman@succeed.net, 265-8387 Bill Holman
Nominations.....	Dick Corn
Christmas Year Round	Harold Graves
Chapter Events	Vacant
Shredding Program.....	Dan Davis
NCCVC	Margie Buhler, Pete Burelle
Web Master.....	Ralph Remick

Nevada County Veterans Affairs Rep.

Eric	(530) 273-3396
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The Vinh Son Orphanage, has a new web site

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Berry Bushes Removed



Not licensed by the contractors state license board

Membership Facts Chapter 535

VVA	
Individual members	26
Life members	37
AVVA	
Individual members	1
Life member	2
Total	66



Upcoming Dates and Events

April 4	Chapter Meeting 6 pm
May 2	Chapter Meeting 6 pm

Veterans Directory

Congress

Senate - Veterans Affairs Committee202-224-9126
House - Veterans Affairs Committee.....202-225-3527

Department of Veterans Affairs

Board of Veterans Appeals202-233-3001
Central Office202-233-4000
Freedom of Information/Privacy Act202-233-3616
Personnel Locator.....202-233-4000
Public Information202-233-3056
Veterans Health Administration202-535-7010
VA Telephone Care Program800-733-0502
Cemetery, Burial, & Headstone Info.....800-697-6947

Agencies

Department of Defense703-545-6700
DEERS Information (California).....800-334-4162
CHAMPUS (California).....800-741-5048
Office of Management and Budget Veterans Affairs.202-395-4500
Small Business Administration Office of Veterans
Affairs202-205-6773

Locator & Reunion Services

Army Worldwide Locator.....317-542-4211
Navy Times Locator Services703-750-8636
Service Reunions703-998-7035
Vietnam Veterans Locator.....319-388-9023
Veteran's Locator Service 800-449-VETS

Miscellaneous

Vietnam Women's Memorial Project202-328-7253
Sons & Daughters In Touch CA805-872-4035
Retired Pay - Cleveland DFAS.....800-321-1080
Navy Lodging..... 800-NAVY INN
Army Lodging 800-GO ARMY

Presidents Message continued

Agent Orange

Bill Hodges, Chair of the California State Council Agent Orange Committee, gave an excellent presentation at our March Chapter meeting on medical problems associated with agent orange and other toxic materials that our troops serving in Vietnam, along the DMZ in Korea in the late 1960's, the Persian Gulf War I and Iraq were exposed to. Because of the importance of this topic, we sent invitations to members of other veterans groups and unaffiliated veterans and their families to join us for Bill's presentation. About sixty people attended the meeting. For those who missed the meeting, elsewhere in this newsletter are a copy of Bill's remarks.

Fred Buhler, President 265-4878



Newsletter Submissions

Please ensure that submissions for the newsletter reach us no-later-than the 15th of the month before the meeting. They may be mailed to:

VVA Chapter 535

Attn: Newsletter Editor
18455 Augustine Rd, Nevada City, CA 95959
e-mail to bholman@succeed.net or
call Bill Holman at (530) 265-8387

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of Vietnam Veterans of America National, State Council, or Chapter 535 or the newsletter editor, but those of the author of the comments.

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Has Your Address Changed?

Please let us know before the Post office quits forwarding your newsletters. If you find your not receiving your newsletter's or hearing from us, please contact Bill Holman at 265-8387.

Chapter 535 Annual Meeting & Elections On April 4th our chapter will hold our annual meeting and elect officers and board members for the coming year.

The following candidates have been nominated.

President	Fred Buhler
Vice President	Dick Corn
Secretary	Dave Johnson
Treasurer	Harold Graves
Director	Ric Sheridan
Director	Dan Davis
Director	Bill Holman
Director	Kent Hawley
Director	Pete Burelle
Director	Ralph Remick
CSC Representative	Pete Burelle
CSC Representative (alternate)	Fred Buhler

Nominations from the floor will be welcome. The meeting will be held in the dining room. Francis Sheridan will provide a pot of her world famous beans.

Hope you can join us.

“Who Cannot Buy a Gun?”

Persons who may be prohibited from purchasing a firearm as a result of data obtained from the NICS background check include:

- Convicted felons and people under indictment for a felony
- Fugitives from justice
- Unlawful drug users or drug addicts
- Individuals who have been determined to be mentally incompetent
- Illegal aliens and legal aliens admitted under a non-immigrant visa
- Individuals who have been dishonorably discharged from the military
- Persons who have renounced their American citizenship
- Persons under domestic violence restraining orders
- Persons convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence crimes

Between 2001 and 2011, the FBI reports that over 100 million Brady Act background checks were performed; resulting in more than 700,000 gun purchases being denied.”

Secondly, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder does not mean you are automatically incapable of wielding a firearm especially if one is a veteran. Veterans are far more trained to own and properly use a weapon than most of the average population. In Shawn Gourley’s letter to Senator Feinstein she points out that some police officers can and do have PTSD. Police officers with PTSD are still working where they are required to use force if the need arises. Being consistent with Senator Feinstein’s line of thought would cripple the American police force and is highly unreasonable. In her effort to remove guns from America, it seems she is willing to place civilians in harms way as well as undercut all the efforts and progress Americans have made in helping veterans seek help for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. If PTSD becomes a determining factor in whether or not you can keep your second amendment rights it is quite probable that veterans and many civilians will no longer seek treatment.

The reasons Shawn stated in her letter as well as the reasons I have pointed out are just the tip of the iceberg that demonstrate how far Dianne Feinstein’s remarks are from reality.

[Source: *Digital Journal Op ED | Samantha A. Torrence | 10 Mar 2013 ++*]/article/345317#ixzz2OwcRp7t5

Vet Toxic Exposure

Veterans’ claims

DISEASE	FILED	GRANTED	DENIED
Autoimmune disorders	39	8	31
Breast cancer	30	17	13
Bladder cancer	72	50	22
Liver cancer	13	5	8
Kidney cancer	74	51	23
Chronic renal disease	91	11	80
Leukemias and lymphomas	125	69	56
Lung cancer	27	12	15
Neurobehavioral disorders	38	4	34
Prostate cancer	136	60	76
Hepatic steatosis	11	7	4
Parkinson’s disease	15	8	7
Esophageal cancer	7	3	4
Miscellaneous conditions	2,555	212	2,343

Note: Some veterans file claims for more than one disease. Source: Department of Veterans Affairs

Agent Orange and Later Toxins

While we’ve always known that “War is Hell!”, it’s gotten even worse, as a large part of that Hell, is self-inflicted. As if the danger of being shot and hit, or catching shrapnel, stepping on mines weren’t bad enough, our military has chemicals to worry about.

In WW I (The war to end all wars), it was the Germans gassing their opponents. Towards the end of WW II, at the behest of our military leaders, chemical companies came up with a means to defoliate large plots of land. The intent was to clear landing spaces, and also to eliminate hiding places used by the enemy.

Wide-spread usage of these defoliants didn’t occur until our involvement in Southeast Asia, where the jungle provided cover for the VC and NVA. Of course, there was also the usage of these chemicals to clear vegetation in and around our bases. Not generally known at the time, was the fact that it was also being used, not just in Vietnam, but in other countries, as well. Including the United States of America!

Initially, a serviceman or woman was required to PROVE that they had been exposed to, what became popularly known as “Agent Orange”. If DOD had a record of AO being used in a particular area, then your chances of being treated, improved.

If, however, you were in an area (Laos, Cambodia) that we were not “officially” in, you were toast, because your DD-

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214 didn't show that you were "there".

After many years of not providing our veterans with the care that they were legally entitled to, our current Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Eric Shinseki (Retired General), allowed as how that if you took one step into Vietnam, you were "presumed" to have come in contact with AO. This, of course, led to a dramatic increase in the number of claims being filed, which slowed the process. However, many veterans never got the word that they were not able to file their claims, so have gone untreated, or died. The plot thickens.

What about those who served in the Blue Water Navy? Why are they showing the symptoms of AO, even though they never stepped foot on land, while serving off the coast? Large Navy ships have "evaporators", which take in seawater, and render it mineral-free, to allow it's use in the ship's boilers.

Except that a study by the Australian and French governments, found that the dioxins were not only NOT eliminated during the desalinization of seawater, but actually caused it to be concentrated.

What does this mean? Well, the guys on ships were cooking with AO contaminated water, showering with it, brushing their teeth with it, and drinking it.

How would you like to take your poison, today? Oh, and the United States government, the one we served, rejected this study. Why? Because they were not US Navy ships!

The mere fact that they use the same evaporators is only a technicality.

Dow and Monsanto were sued, and paid out millions of dollars to the federal government, to be used for the care of our affected veterans.

However, there was a stipulation that this was a one-time payment, and there would be no further repercussions. The case has been re-opened, but the dead-line for pursuing additional claims is fast approaching. I believe it to be October of this year.

What can we do? We need to educate our local, state and federal representatives! There are many new faces in our collective legisla-

tures, and they've not acquired this vital information by osmosis. We need to tell them!

Right now, we're fortunate that politicians, Democrat, Republican or Independent, are falling all over themselves to show that "we support our veterans!". We MUST take advantage of this! We MUST strike while the iron is hot!

OK, what do YOU have to do?

Get down to your nearest VA clinic, and find out who doctor in charge of the AGENT ORANGE REGISTRY is, then go there with your DD-214 in hand.

If you don't get any satisfactory results there, contact your County Veterans Service Officer. If you have a Veterans Service Office, they are also a good source of assistance. Or, contact your local VVA chapter, to find out if there's VVA VSO to contact. Other hazards experienced by our veterans, include the first Gulf War. Remember the infamous Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs)? What didn't make it to Syria, were dumped into the Iraqi-built tank traps.

The traps were filled with oil, and set ablaze. The aroma of burning mustard, sarin and whatever else Saddam was using against his own people must have been scintillating! After Stormin' Norman chased the Republican Guard out of Kuwait, remember what the Iraqis did to the oil fields? They set them on fire! Burning petroleum is TOXIC! How about now? Well, besides IEDs, homicide bombers, our guys and gals get to suffer the effects of the "burn pits".

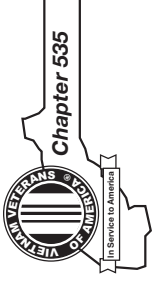
What's a burn pit? Out there in the desert, there is no sewage system. So, human waste, medical waste and everything else is placed in a large pit or barrel, filled with diesel fuel, and set on fire. Again, more toxins to breathe! Again, we need to educate those who would send us off to war.

"The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive veterans of early wars were treated and appreciated by our nation."

George Washington

Source: Bill Hodges, Chair of the California State Council Agent Orange Committee

April - 2013



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	April Fools Day James Ferrier	2	3	General Membership & Elections Meeting Meeting 6:00 pm	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
			Douglas Becker	25	26	27
21	22	23	24			
28	29	30				

Application For Membership
VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA, INC., CHAPTER 535

P.O. Box 37, Grass Valley, CA 95945

Individual membership is open to all Vietnam-era veterans who served on active duty for other than training purposes between August 5, 1964 – May 7, 1975 and In-Country Veterans: February 28, 1961 – May 7, 1975.

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Address _____ Apt. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone () _____ Work Phone () _____ Email _____

Marital Status _____ Spouse's Name _____

Chapter No. **535** Sponsor _____ ID No. _____

- ◆ **Membership Type:** Individual – 1 year @ \$20 annual Individual – 3 years @ \$50
(select one) Life Member **Payment Plan** \$50 down, 8 monthly payments of \$25

Select Age Group Ages 49 and under \$250 Ages 50-55 \$225

Ages 56-60 \$200 Ages 61-65 \$175 Ages 66 and over \$150

- ◆ **Payment Method:** Check Money Order Visa MasterCard
(select one)

◆ **Card Number** _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Individual members **must** submit a copy of their DD-214 along with this application and dues payment. Associate participation is open to family, friends, all veterans, and other interested persons.

In Service To America

Address Correction Requested

