

NEWS RELEASE

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September 1, 2010

DAV Applauds Service Connection for New Illnesses Linked to Agent Orange

WASHINGTON—The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) commends Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki for his leadership in pursuing a final regulation granting presumptive service connection for three new diseases resulting from exposure to Agent Orange during the Vietnam War.

The rule, published Aug. 31, adds Parkinson's disease and ischemic heart disease to the list of presumptive service-connected illnesses and expands the presumption for leukemia to include chronic B cell leukemia, such as hairy cell leukemia.

"Secretary Shinseki has portrayed determination and leadership in pursuing the final regulation based on the latest evidence from a 2008 independent study by the Institute of Medicine concerning health problems associated with exposure to herbicides, like Agent Orange," said DAV Washington Headquarters Executive Director David W. Gorman. "We anticipate the VA will begin making decisions on claims for these conditions when the rule takes effect in 60 days."

The DAV is urging Vietnam veterans with these three diseases to submit their claims for compensation as soon as possible. "In anticipation of the regulatory change, DAV's highly trained professional National Service Officers began filing claims for veterans with these disabilities since last October," Gorman said. "We encourage those who feel they may have a claim to contact their nearest DAV National Service Office to begin the claims process."

Veterans who served in Vietnam between Jan. 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975, are presumed by VA to have been exposed to harmful herbicides. If they suffer from any of the three diseases, it is presumed that the illnesses are service connected, and they will be eligible for compensation and VA health care. The VA estimates that more than 150,000 veterans will submit claims in the next 12 to 18 months and 90,000 previously denied claims, including death claims, will be reviewed for possible entitlement to service connection.

"Vietnam veterans with these illnesses will have an easier time obtaining their earned compensation and health care thanks to the new presumptive service connection rule," said Gorman. "Our nation's Vietnam veterans served with honor and distinction, and have suffered significantly from their exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides. The DAV thanks Secretary Shinseki for his dedication to ensuring that their sacrifice is remembered."

The 1.2 million-member Disabled American Veterans, a non-profit organization founded in 1920 and chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1932, represents this nation's disabled veterans. It is dedicated to a single purpose: building better lives for our nation's disabled veterans and their families. For more information, visit the organization's Web site www.dav.org.

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