

Did You Know?

(By: **Raymond P. Toczek Legion Service Officer**)

312-980-4264

Raymond.Toczek@va.gov

That another year has swiftly passed and 2009 is now one for the history books. However there were many law changes in Congress which affect veterans benefits and these will be with us in future years to come. I have highlighted some of the more important changes. If you should any questions please feel free to contact me at the phone number or e-mail shown above.

2009 in review

- Three new conditions were added to the presumptive list of Agent Orange related diseases. Veterans who served in Vietnam, even one day, who have these conditions medically diagnosed can now receive service-related compensation. The new conditions are Parkinson's disease, ischemic heart disease and B cell leukemia. As a reminder adult onset diabetes was added a few years ago to the list of Agent Orange related conditions and we have seen many new claims for that common ailment. In country Vietnam veterans who have diabetes can also claim service-connection for many secondary conditions caused by their diabetes. For instance, peripheral neuropathy, kidney damage, erectile dysfunction, hypertension, toe amputations and vision problems if caused by their diabetes.
- The big loophole for Vietnam veterans who would like to enroll in the VA health care system but don't have a service-related injury or illness has not yet been closed. Veterans who served in Vietnam, have no service-related injuries and have income over the VA hospital means test limits can still be enrolled in category six and receive treatment. They will only have to make the co-payment. We have gotten dozens of veterans into the VA hospital through this loophole and they now are paying \$8 a month for their prescriptions instead of \$50 to \$75, even \$100 in some cases.
- Former Prisoners-of-War who currently suffer from Osteoporosis can now get compensation. That condition was added to their presumptive list. There are less than 1,000 former Prisoners-of-War living in Illinois at this time. We checked with the VA and the vast majority are receiving their benefits. If your Post has a former POW who **is not** getting any compensation please have them contact us **A.S.A.P.**
- Increased the income thresholds for category 8 veterans at VA hospitals thereby allowing more veterans to enroll. Also, many veterans who were previously denied enrollment due to their wages were put into the system due to downsizing and losing their jobs in this current economic crisis.
- Changed the VA regulations to make it easier for veterans to receive compensation for PTSD. The evidence requirement was reduced. This applies especially to those service members who were diagnosed with PTSD while still in the service.
- Lump sum payments of \$9,000-\$15,000 to Filipino veterans of World War II. Filipino veterans who are not United States citizens get \$9,000 and those who are U.S. citizens receive \$15,000.
- Granting statutory housebound benefits (\$320 a month) to certain service-connected disabled veterans rated 100% and having additional conditions rated a combined 60%.

I am sure two thousand and ten will bring even more changes. I'll keep track of them and let our readers know in an article same time next year. In the meantime, from your Chicago VA&R staff.....

Happy New Year!!!