

Pennsylvania  
State Council



# The PASC Newsletter

March 2019

## Vietnam Veterans of America Pennsylvania State Council

A Congressionally Chartered Veterans Service Organization

### President Donald J. Trump to Award the Medal of Honor

#### Staff Sergeant Travis Atkins

On the morning of June 1, 2007, Staff Sgt. Travis Atkins' squad was conducting route security in the town of Abu Samak, Iraq, when his team observed two suspected insurgents attempting to cross the route they were securing.

After one of Atkins' teammates yelled at the two insurgents to stop, they began acting very erratically, acknowledging commands but also appearing as if they might attempt to flee.

Atkins led his vehicle to the suspected insurgents and dismounted with his platoon medic in an attempt to interdict and search them. As he reached them, one of the insurgents began to resist the search and hand-to-hand combat ensued. Realizing the insurgent had explosives under his clothes, Atkins heroically fought the insurgent, keeping him from reaching the suicide vest he was wearing. As the hand-to-hand battle continued, the insurgent was able to reach the suicide vest under his clothing. At that point, Atkins wrapped the insurgent up and threw him to the ground, away from his Soldiers who were standing a few feet away.



Aware of the imminent danger, Atkins threw himself on top of the suicide bomber, pinning him to the ground and shielding his Soldiers from the imminent explosion while bearing the brunt of the blast as the bomb detonated.

In this critical and selfless act of valor, which mortally wounded him, Atkins saved the lives of three other Soldiers who were with him.





**Vietnam Veterans proudly support Danielle DeAngelis, Ms. Wheelchair, 2019 who will advocate for the disabled in the Commonwealth. She can be reached at [MWPA2019@gmail.com](mailto:MWPA2019@gmail.com) (Pictured are Rich Sam. George Puzio and Art Villafane)**

**Chapter 415 (Lehigh Valley) marched in Allentown's St. Patrick's Parade on March 17th. At one juncture, they turned the street corner and received this "Welcome Home" and "Thank You For Your Service" cheer from the city folk.**





## PROPOSED RESOLUTION #1

### ASSURE THE TOMORROW

Submitted by: Working Group II – Francisco Muñoz III – Chair

Resolution endorsed by Chapter: No

Resolution endorsed by State Council: No

Date endorsed by State Council: No

Responsible committee: Working Group II

Revision existing resolution: No

**Issue:** There will always be veterans to serve. Conflicts are inevitable so is securing our country from all enemies foreign and domestic. There must continue to be an organization to meet the needs of veterans.

**Background:** The VVA in its 40 year history has advocated for better treatment of veterans ensuring that they receive the benefits promised. As veterans age, their needs become more pronounced especially in the areas of health. The consequences of toxic exposure will be felt for generations. It is imperative that there be an organization to promote the health and welfare of veterans.

**Proposed Position:** Now Be It Resolved that, Vietnam Veterans of America, at the 19<sup>th</sup> Biennial National Convention in Spokane, Washington, takes the following position - it will lead in the formation and empowerment of a new veteran's organization to carry on the advocacy and accomplishments of VVA including but not limited to the Vet Centers, legislative advocacy, service officers program and incarcerated veterans in the justice system.

## PROPOSED RESOLUTION #2

### FUTURE VETERAN SERVICE ORGANIZATION COMMITTEE

Submitted by: Working Group II – Francisco Muñoz III – Chair

Resolution endorsed by Chapter: No

Resolution endorsed by State Council: No

Date endorsed by State Council: No

Responsible committee: Working Group II

Revision existing resolution: No

**Issue:** The Officers and the Board of Director of Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc., mandated to "To establish two panels: Working Group 1 and Working Group II to assess the future of VVA.

*Working Group II "will determine the feasibility of forming, chartering, funding and/or empowerment of a new veterans organization to perpetuate our legacy and assure the tomorrow of all veterans, which will be communicated to the membership for approval at a Convention."*

**Background:** Vietnam Veterans of America has been on the forefront, since 1983, in seeking legislation and benefits for Vietnam veterans, as well as other generations of veterans. Our motto is "In Service to America," and our Founding Principle is "Never Again Will One Generation of Veterans Abandon Another."

VVA has supported veterans of other generations in their struggle with compensation for service related disabilities, children's healthcare, veterans environmental health effects due to oil fires, toxic exposure due to burn pits, depleted uranium, exposure to sarin gas, and PTSD, TBI, and recently with bad papers which we have addressed since the Vietnam War.

**Proposed Position:** Now Be It Resolved that, Vietnam Veterans of America, at the 19<sup>th</sup> Biennial National Convention in Spokane, Washington, takes the following position:

That it will continue its mandate to support a committee to follow up on the formation of a new veteran service organization to perpetuate our legacy and assure the tomorrow of all veterans and to help form a veteran service organization that will represent all veterans from all wars/ conflicts that the United States has or will be involved in the future.

# VA on path to cure 100,000 Veterans of hepatitis C

WASHINGTON — Today the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it is on track to eliminate the [hepatitis C virus \(HCV\)](#) in as few as two months, in all Veterans willing and able to be treated.

As of March 3, nearly 116,000 Veterans started all-oral hepatitis C medications in VA, of which 96,654 Veterans completed treatment and have been cured.

“As the largest single provider of HCV care in the U.S., this is terrific news because it means we are within striking range of eliminating hepatitis C among Veterans under the care of the Veterans Health Administration,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “Diagnosing, treating and curing hepatitis C virus infection among Veterans has been a significant priority for VA.”

HCV infection can lead to advanced liver disease (ALD), liver cancer and death. Treatment of HCV can prevent development or progression of ALD, greatly improving survival. However, before 2014, HCV treatment required weekly interferon injections for up to a year, with low cure rates (35-55 percent) among Veterans and significant physical and psychiatric side effects leading to frequent early discontinuation.

Up to that time, of the approximately 180,000 Veterans in VA care who had been diagnosed with chronic HCV infection, only 12,000 had been treated and cured, while over 30,000 had developed ALD.

In early 2014, highly effective, less toxic, all-oral, direct-acting antivirals became available, revolutionizing the treatment of HCV. With the support of Congress and other stakeholders, VA implemented an aggressive program to find all undiagnosed Veterans in VA care with HCV — including those who did not know they carried the infection — link them to HCV care, and offer them treatment with these new medications.

At the peak of this effort to rapidly deploy all-oral direct-acting antivirals, VA began treating close to 2,000 Veterans with HCV every week; nearly one treatment started every minute of every work day.

As a result of this historic effort, the overall death rate one year after treatment reduced to 80 percent among Veterans in VA care with HCV. Veterans cured of HCV with these medications were also 84 percent less likely to develop liver cancer.

The announcement cements VA’s position as a national leader in diagnosis and treatment of HCV and marks a major milestone in the nation’s fight against viral hepatitis. VA is on track to treat more than 125,000 Veterans with these lifesaving medications by October. Currently, fewer than 27,000 Veterans in VA care remain to be treated.

All marketed hepatitis C medications are on the [VA National Formulary](#). Hepatitis C medications used today have few side effects and can be administered as a once a day treatment for as little as eight weeks.

For more information, visit <https://www.hepatitis.va.gov/>.



## VA to Announce Decision on New Agent Orange Presumptive Conditions



As reported March 26 by Patricia Kime for [Military.com](http://Military.com), three years after a scientific body recommended that the VA consider adding three conditions — bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinson's-like symptoms — to the list of qualifying diseases tied to Agent Orange, affected veterans may soon find out whether they are eligible for disability compensation and VA healthcare. During a Senate Veterans Affairs hearing on the VA budget, Dr. Richard Stone, the executive in charge of the Veterans Health Administration, said a decision on the three illnesses likely would come in the next 90 days

## VA Recommends Dropping Legal Challenge over 'Blue Water' Navy Veterans Benefits

As reported March 26 by Leo Shane III for *Military Times*, VA leaders will not recommend appealing a federal court ruling to award disability benefits to thousands of Vietnam veterans who claim exposure to cancer-causing chemical defoliants during ship deployments off that country's coastline, officials confirmed Tuesday.





# Veterans Crisis Line



1-800-273-8255

**PRESS 1**

## Government Programs that Help Vets with Jobs and Benefits

As reported March 18 by Richard Sisk for [Military.com](http://Military.com), the government lacked a list, or “inventory,” of the various programs and initiatives it has to aid veterans and transitioning service members in finding jobs, benefits, and small business opportunities, so a watchdog agency has come up with one. “We found 11 agencies offering 45 programs,” according to a January report of the Government Accountability Office, an independent arm of Congress.



## Message to Prospective Candidates for VVA National Office

There are now **3 days** left for you to send in your Letter of Intent, along with the other required documents that must be filled out and postmarked no later than the **March 31, 2019 deadline**.

For those who have filled out their Letter of Intent, don't forget to fill out the other required forms that are in the candidates' packet. Failure to do so will result in your name being removed from the Candidates' Roster. The Elections Committee encourages all potential candidates to not delay, as the clock is ticking.

