

Did You Know?

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That each year over 300 bills are submitted in Congress that are related to various veteran benefits. After many committee meetings, rewrites and compromises only a hand full are approved and sent to the President to sign. Most don't impact the general veteran population e.g. naming a National Highway stretch after a Medal of Honor recipient or issuing a postage stamp about a famous World War II battle. But some have major impact. The recent Blue Water Navy Veterans Act comes to mind. Passed into law last January, it has generated over 500 million dollars in VA compensation benefits to those Navy vets who served off the coast of Vietnam and the DMZ in Korea (12 miles) during the Nam War, and were exposed to Agent Orange.

HR 7105 was recently signed into law and is hundreds of pages long but I wanted to bring your attention to certain provisions of that legislation.

Veterans will once again be able to submit Disability Benefit Questionnaires from PRIVATE doctors to support their claims for service-connected compensation. The VA had banned that for a while.

The Vietnam War Era has been extended back to 11/1/55, which means peacetime veterans who served from that date up to 1961 may now be able to qualify for Non-Service Connected pension.

Vocational Rehabilitation benefits for disabled vets used to have a 12 year limit of use after the VA rating. For those disabled vets who were discharged after 1/1/13, they will now have no time limit.

Child care for veterans who use the VA hospitals or clinics will now be available.

Widows and widowers who's spouse died of their service-connected condition, etc. can now remarry at age 55 and still keep their DIC benefits. The age was 57.

Veterans filing claims for Military Sexual Trauma can choose whether they are examined by a male or female doctor.

Homeless programs and vouchers at the VA may be extended to those veterans who received an "Other than Honorable" discharge.

As with any new law, the VA must first prepare regulations, then guidelines and policy mandates before all these take effect. But if you think you may be affected by any of the above, be sure to reach out to your VA hospital, clinic or the VA benefits department. They can be reached at 1-800-827-1000.

As this law is implemented, if I see any other sections that may have a big impact on our veterans I will let you know. And, as with all new laws, there may be items in the fine print that may clarify some of the above items.

I don't know about you, but this COVID has started to give me nightmares. Just last week, I had a dream I was a muffler.....work up exhausted!