

## Veterans Views     Agent Orange and widow's benefits

How are all you veterans doing? Anyone actually reading this? I hope you are. Let me know what other info/topics you'd like to read about.

Are you a vet with some health problems? Or, a vet in reasonably good health? Have you thought about "signing up" for VA health benefits, just in case? Well either way, stop thinking about it and do it! If you had registered with the VA medical system prior to 16 Jan 2003 (they changed the rules then), you'd have a better chance of being helped than you do now. So, don't take a chance on them changing the rules again and excluding you altogether!

A word to the wise: If you can find the time, drop by my office and pick up a form, it will take you about 20 minutes to fill it out and drop it in the mail to the VA, and you will then be enrolled in their health system. This doesn't mean you'll automatically get any benefits, but it does "get you into" their system. Getting into the system is important because no one knows when the rules might change again, as they did in 2003. So, get this done!

Were you ever "in-country" Vietnam? Or, near the DMZ in Korea from 1968-1969? Or, did you work in any way with herbicides? If you said yes to any of these, you are very likely eligible for a free VA health examination. Call this number: 800-410-9723. If you don't want to go through quite as much hassle with recorded messages and instructions, spend your own money and call Fargo VA at this number: 701-232-3241, extension 3410. Tell them you are requesting an Agent Orange Registry health exam at the Fargo VA Medical Center. What have you got to lose? You might have a lot to gain.

If you are the widow of a war-time veteran, please call me (463-3308) or stop by my office at the court house. You might be eligible for a pension. Pension eligibility is determined by your current income and general financial status; you may or may not qualify, but we'll never know if you don't give it a try, so come on by!

Anybody know of any veterans who need daily help in caring for themselves—do they have trouble in dressing, washing, bathing, eating, walking, seeing, etc? If you do, let me know. As is the case with all this VA stuff, there are rules and qualifying conditions (that are very confidential), and one vet may qualify for something while another may not, but again, if we don't try, we'll never know.

Finally, I ask you vets who are in good health to help me look out for those who are not. We are a team. Every one of us who wore the uniform has an obligation to watch our buddies' backs. Many are reluctant to see me, others simply do not know about potential benefits, and still more are unable to comprehend fully the help that may be available. Help me help you and our teammates who proudly served. Let me know, if you know a brother in need.

Over and out.