

# JWV 2008 Resolutions

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## Agent Orange

The Department of Veterans Affairs has required veterans who allege an exposure to Agent Orange to prove that they set foot on the ground in the Republic of Vietnam. There are those veterans who are suffering the disastrous results of Agent Orange exposure whose contamination occurred while aboard ships off the coast of Vietnam. The Agent Orange Equity Act would correct this misinterpretation of the sense of Congress permitting every veteran who was awarded the Vietnam Service Medal or who was otherwise deployed in or near the Republic of Vietnam to be treated and compensated for the results of being exposed to this toxin. The Jewish War Veterans of the USA supports the amendments to the Law which would expand the definition to all veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange.

## Cost of Medication through the VA

The Jewish War Veterans of the USA finds it difficult to understand why the Department Veterans Affairs charges \$8.00 for a monthly supply of a generic drug while so many chain stores are now charging \$4.00 for a monthly supply and, some, \$10.00 for a three month supply. These are obviously the same or equivalent medications from the same or equivalent manufacturers. Since many veterans take multiple medications, the expense of these medicines can have a major impact on their ability to make ends meet. Therefore, the Jewish War Veterans of the USA calls upon Congress and the Department of Veterans Affairs, 'DVA' to reconsider the pricing of generic drugs to charge the same as or less than the prices charged by private vendors or, in the alternative, to write prescriptions which can be filled by commercial pharmacies.

Furthermore, the Jewish War Veterans of the USA calls upon the DVA to make available to veterans those new medications which are not in its pharmacopeias because there are no generic formulations but which better fulfill the medical needs of the veterans.

### **Use of School Books Published or Sponsored by Foreign Nations**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has supplied Arab-language textbooks for use in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Even a casual scanning of the text reveals a strong anti-Jewish bias. Clearly, textbooks used in any school located anywhere within the borders of the United State of America must not contain hate language, regardless of the source of the book or the group targeted for the venom. Therefore, the Jewish War Veterans of the USA asks Congress and the several States to establish clear guidelines as to what textbooks can say as to any group, race, religion, nationality, etc. It is the purpose of the Jewish War Veterans not to censor any textbook but to insure that any textbook is not a conduit of hatred and bigotry.

### **Support for Determination of Parkinson's Disease as Service Connected**

There is considerable information that the onset of Parkinson's disease may be service-connected. Much of the information comes from well-respected and widely recognized universities and research facilities. The Jewish War Veterans of the USA calls upon the Department of Veterans Affairs to consider the expansive research available and, after careful review, make a determination whether the research supports the proposition that Parkinson's disease among veterans is *prima facie* service-connected, or that veterans who can meet a set of published criteria will be determined to have a service-connected disability.

### **Department of Veterans Affairs Budget**

The Jewish War Veterans of the USA has long supported mandatory full funding of the Department of Veterans Affairs, especially mandatory funding of health care. It appears most unseemly that the veterans of this great Nation must come with hat-in-hand to the Administration and Congress each year like a beggar asking for a handout and alms. With the return of hundreds of thousands of men and women from Iraq and Afghanistan, it is even more demeaning to the

veterans' community. This new generation of veterans is returning home with a higher number of Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome cases and, the signature injury of these theaters, Traumatic Brain Injury. Our Department of Veterans Affairs seems ill-prepared to properly care for these new veterans. Moreover, it is obvious that there must be expedited determinations of claims done right the first time so the veterans of the current wars get their benefits quickly and accurately. The Jewish War Veterans of the USA calls upon the Administration and Congress to adequately prepare for these returning wounded warriors by having sufficient staff, both in terms of numbers and training, and funding in place to meet their emergent needs as well as the needs of those veterans already in the system.

### **MIA/POW**

There are still thousands of MIA/POW remains for which no accounting has ever been honestly and fully given. The Jewish War Veterans of the USA calls upon Congress and the President to continue this Nation's commitment to locate and return to this Nation the remains of the MIA/POWs still listed as Killed in Action-No Body Found and to continue to use all our available resources for that single purpose.

### **Treating the Wounded Warriors and their Families**

Recent studies have brought to the fore that there are far too many errors of commission and omission in the care and treatment of today's wounded warriors. These include not only the service member, but the servicemember's family as well. We have learned from various studies that which we knew intuitively, that the service member's family must be cared for before, during and after any deployment. The military is deploying and redeploying members of the Reserve and National Guard components as never before in history. We know that these multiple deployments cause tremendous stresses upon the family fiber and structure. The men and women coming home are not ready to be simply deactivated and dropped back into the family.

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The family dynamics have changed in the 18-24 months of their absence and neither the service member nor the family is prepared to reintegrate the absent member without some level of professional assistance. Therefore, the Jewish War Veterans of the USA calls upon the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs to work together to insure that the transition from a military family to a veteran's family is done seamlessly and well-orchestrated so that there is no break in services, counseling and medical care for the wounded warrior and the family unit.

### **Dole-Shalala Report**

The Dole-Shalala Report highlighted many deficiencies within the delivery of services to the veterans' community as well as to the members of the active and activated military. One aspect of this Report is its call for the creation of patient recovery coordinators. These patient recovery coordinators would serve as the advocates for the men and women who are unable to advocate for themselves. They would know "the system" and would know which buttons to push and which "buzz words" to utter.

The Report also spoke of the need for a unified system of ratings for service-connected disabilities for retirement and separation. The Report highlighted the need to have the Departments of Defense and of Veterans Affairs use the same lexicon, evaluating procedures and rating criteria so that there are no discrepancies between the two Departments and everyone would, ideally, be able to safely predict the results of an evaluation. One key element of this goal would be to give the Departments of Defense and of Veterans Affairs mutual access to the other's medical records. Without this access, the current unacceptable system will continue to exist, unabated and still unmanageable. Therefore, the Jewish War Veterans of the USA calls upon Congress and the Administration to implement the major changes called for in the Dole-Shalala Report.

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### **Claims Delayed Are Claims Denied**

We know from the Dole-Shalala Commission that the number of initial claims and claims for service-connected disabilities continue to rise. Coupled with pending claims for educational benefits, the Department of Veterans Affairs is grappling with more than 860,000 claims. The average processing time for all classes of claims is over 170 days. Therefore, the Jewish War Veterans of the USA calls upon Congress and the Department of Veterans Affairs to automate the processing of claims in a paperless environment and to invest heavily in ‘state-of-art technology’ and information management support so the claims are moved along expeditiously. Moreover, to get the money into the pockets of the veterans more quickly, the Jewish War Veterans of the USA supports the paying of well-developed claims prior to a formal decision.

### **Service members Civil Relief Act**

The Servicemembers Civil Relief Act replaced the out-dated Soldiers and Sailors Relief Act. It is designed to protect members of the military on active duty. Since its passage, some deficiencies have become obvious and need to be addressed. Clearly, many of the protections afforded members of the military must be given to their families as well. Also, when activated, the servicemembers need to be released from personal service contracts such as cell phones, utilities, cable/dish television agreement, etc. Servicemembers called to active duty while enrolled in an educational institution should be entitled to a full refund of their tuition, fees, etc., and should be permitted to reenroll upon their release from active duty without the necessity of going through the application process again. Furthermore, the grace period for the starting date of the repayment of all student loans should be abated and adjusted to reflect the period of time the individual was on active duty. Finally, employers and employees should be permitted to contribute to defined contribution retirement plans (401) (k)-(403) (b) during periods of active duty of members of the Reserve and National Guard components.

### **Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Act**

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Act (USERRA) is designed to protect servicemembers as they return to the workforce. While the Law works quite well, it can still use some amendments to make it assist returning servicemembers and their families. It must be made clear that the Law supersedes any contract regardless of the contracting parties and that any complaining employee is shielded against discriminatory dismissal. Furthermore, the Act must provide for punitive damages in some of the more egregious cases and must allow the injured worker to bring suit against employers. Additionally, the aggrieved worker should be able to pick the forum, i.e., either state or federal court as he/she decides. Finally, protections need to be extended to those family members who must suspend their employment to care for a dependent due the activation of a spouse or other individual akin to a spouse.

### **Homeless Veterans**

The term “homeless veteran” should not exist. There should not be homeless veterans, nor should the family of a veteran be homeless. In this country of countless wealth and prosperity, the wherewithal and ability to find housing and services for every veteran exists. The real question is, “Do we, as a society, have the commitment to secure a safe haven for our veterans and their families to enable them to reintegrate back into society?” Until we make that unbridled, wholehearted commitment, without reservation, there will always be homeless veterans and their families walking the streets of our cities and living in squalor in our forests. Therefore, the Jewish War Veterans of the USA calls upon Congress, the Administration and the Department of Veterans Affairs to seek out the homeless veterans and their families and secure for them the complete array of services which would enable them to return to society as productive members be able to return to the table as individuals with dignity and a true sense of self-worth.

## Housing Resolution

It is clear that there is a crisis in adequate housing with all segments of American society. This is especially true within the very low income veterans' community. The House of Representatives has passed H.R. 3329 entitled the "Homes for Heroes Act of 2008." The Bill is aimed at assisting veterans and their dependents afford safe, clean, and habitable rental units. In addition, it would permit the construction of rental units restricted to veterans and their dependents without the requirements of the Fair Housing Act which would make the units available to all without a specific preference to the veteran population. It would, also, create a separate component for veterans and their dependents under Section 8 of the Housing Act and under the Low Income Housing Tax Credit programs. The Jewish War Veterans of the USA supports the "Homes for Heroes Act of 2008" and urges the Senate to act quickly so the Bill can be passed by this Congress rather than await the new Congress and the need to start completely fresh.

## Holocaust Studies

We, as Jews and as veterans, recognize the need to insure that there never is another holocaust. We acknowledge that this is a goal and an ideal. Nevertheless, we vow that we will strive toward this ideal. We know that there will be genocides and "ethnic cleansings" for as long as racial, religious and ethnic hatred are taught in the homes and in the schools. However, in pursuit of our goal, the Jewish War Veterans of the USA supports the development of a Holocaust Studies curriculum which would be mandated and funded by the several States to be taught in every school, be it public or private. It is the hope of the Jewish War Veterans of the USA that by introducing holocaust studies into the schools the next generation of America's young will learn to at least tolerate those who are different than themselves.

### Cremins

“Cremins” is shorthand for cremated remains. It has come to the attention of the Jewish War Veterans of the USA that there are the cremins of veterans sitting on the shelves of funerals homes where a cremation had been requested but the remains never claimed. These cremins have been known to stay on the shelves for decades. We find this intolerable and an insult to the memory of every veteran who ever served this country. Therefore, the Jewish War Veterans of the USA calls on the legislatures of the several States to enact laws which would permit veterans service organizations or the states’ Department of Veterans Affairs or the equivalent to assume possession of these cremins so as to assure that there will be a disposition of the cremated remains in a dignified fashion with the honor due all former members of the Armed Forces.

### Women Veterans

The Jewish War Veterans of the USA has long recognized that women veterans have unique problems arising out of their military service, as well as those problems suffered by all who have served. These problems included sexual harassment and assault, which continue to impact upon the lives of the women long after their separation from active military duty. With the increasing number of women seeing active duty, as a result of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, this Nation is witnessing a rapid and unparalleled number of women in need of counseling and specialized medical services. Therefore, the Jewish War Veterans of the USA calls upon the Departments of Defense and of Veterans Affairs to provide the essential services unique to the female veterans’ population.

### **Bio/Chemical Screening**

With the increased exposure to biological and chemical agents in modern warfare comes the concurrent need for biological and chemical screening. The Jewish War Veterans of the USA recognizes that the Department of Veterans Affairs facilities which now work with veterans exposed to Agent Orange can be and should be utilized to screen and treat veterans suffering from biological and chemical exposure as well.

### **Costs Of Military Traveling On Commercial Airlines**

Several airlines are charging members of the military traveling home or between duty stations for excess luggage. This is blatantly unfair as the servicemember may well be carrying all of his/her worldly possessions to the next stop. The Jewish War Veterans of the USA calls upon the airlines to recognize that servicemembers have special needs when they travel and to refrain from charging them for the excess number of items checked or carried aboard the aircraft.