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**NEWS-01: Veteran Information**

Submitted by: John Dudas, USSVI Veteran Service Officer (VSO) on 4/2/2019  
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**VA to Announce Decision on New Agent Orange Presumptive Conditions**

**Week of April 01, 2019**

**Military.com**

Several years after a scientific body recommended that the Department of Veterans Affairs consider adding four conditions — bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, hypertension 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 health care. During a Senate Veterans Affairs hearing March 26 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.

**Sailors Will No Longer Need 12 Years of Good Conduct to Sport Gold Stripes**

**Week of April 01, 2019**

**Military.com**

The Navy is rescinding its long-standing tradition requiring sailors to have 12 years of blemish-free conduct to rate gold stripes, officials announced March 25. Soon, it won't be so easy to spot enlisted sailors who've gotten into some trouble in the past. Starting June 1, sailors with less-than-perfect records will no longer be required to wear red service stripes and rating badges on their uniforms in place of gold. "All enlisted Sailors with 12 cumulative years of naval active or active reserve service are authorized to wear gold rating badges, and gold service stripes in lieu of red rating badges and stripes," Navy-wide administrative 075/19 states.

**VA to Fight Against Blue Water Navy Veterans**

**Week of April 01, 2019**

**Military.com**

The Department of Veterans Affairs will not appeal a January court ruling that ordered it to provide health care and disability benefits for 90,000 veterans who served on Navy ships during the Vietnam War, likely paving the way for "Blue Water Navy" sailors and Marines to receive Agent Orange-related compensation and VA-paid health care benefits. VA Secretary Robert Wilkie told members of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee on March 26 that he will recommend the Justice Department not fight the decision, handing a victory to ill former service members who fought for years to have their diseases recognized as related to exposure to the herbicide Agent Orange.

**VA continues community suicide-prevention challenge**

Seven sites participate in second Mayor's Challenge policy academy

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) convened seven teams March 27-29 in Arlington, Virginia, for the Mayor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans and their Families.

With the goal of eliminating suicide by promoting a comprehensive public health approach that empowers communities to take action, the sites that participated in the mayor's challenge policy

academy were: Clarksville, Tennessee; Kansas City, Missouri; Oahoma City, Oklahoma; Mecklenburg County, North Carolina; Tulsa, Oklahoma; Reno/Truckee Meadows, Nevada; and Suffolk County, New York.

Suicide is a major public health concern that affects everyone. It is estimated 45,000 Americans, including 6,000 Veterans, die by suicide each year.

“The mayor’s challenge provides a roadmap for how communities can contribute to the national effort of preventing Veteran suicide,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “We are pleased to continue our partnership with SAMHSA, so we can provide suicide-prevention training and support to the communities where Veterans live, work and thrive.”

At the policy academy, representatives from the sites developed strategic action plans to implement in their communities. The collaborative teams included community, municipal and military stakeholders, among others. VA and SAMHSA provided technical assistance to support local efforts, document outcomes and share strategies with other municipalities.

The Mayor’s Challenge was launched in March 2018, bringing together representatives of eight cities to develop local action plans to prevent Veteran suicide. Since then, the Mayor’s Challenge program has expanded to a total of 24 cities. An inaugural Governor’s Challenge that involved seven state teams took place in February, replicating the effort on the state level. Participants in both programs form interagency teams to bolster Veteran suicide-prevention efforts in their communities.

To learn more about the efforts of VA’s Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, visit [https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide\\_prevention](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention). For information on SAMHSA’s suicide prevention efforts, visit <https://www.samhsa.gov/suicide-prevention/samhsas-efforts>.

Veterans who are in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, and those who know a Veteran in crisis, can contact the Veterans Crisis Line for confidential support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Call 800-273-8255 and press 1, send a text message to 838255 or chat online at Vetera

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