

AVVA GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE REPORT

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What the committee has been doing:

The committee has finalized the AVVA Legislative Priorities for the 115th Congress and submitted to the board for final approval.

The committee also worked on producing a sample survey for participants attending the National Convention in New Orleans, the final copy was submitted to the President.

Caregivers update: According to a March 10, article in the Military Times Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin. Expanding Caregivers and Blue Water Navy Update: Veterans Service Organization have concluded their March legislative priorities testimony before the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee and all were all in agreement on expanding caregiver benefits to all veterans and providing benefits and services for Blue Water and Brown Water Navy Veterans. The newly appointed Secretary of Veterans Dr. David Shulkin in a March 10, article in the Military Times supports expanding his department's caregiver benefits to families of veterans of all eras, and thinks the move may be far less costly than most critics expect. <http://www.militarytimes.com/articles/va-caregivers-shulkin-expansion-program>

115th Congress Caregivers and Blue Water Navy legislation

H.R.1472 **Military and Veteran Caregiver Services Improvement Act of 2017** introduced by Rep. James R. Langevi (D-RI-2) companion bill S.591 **Military and Veteran Caregiver Service Improvement Act** introduced by Senator Patty Murray (WA). Expands caregivers' benefits to all veterans.

H.R. 299 **Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2017** introduced by Rep. David G. Valadac (R-CA-21); companion bill S422 **Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2017**, introduced by Senator Gillibran (D-NY).

Toxic Exposure Act Update: AVVA number one legislative priority was introducing and passing a bill in Congress that would foster the peer-reviewed research. After eight years of support for the issue, one of their final acts before the lame duck session of the 114th Congress concluded, the Senate and House passed a "minibus" in the wee hours of the morning on December 10, 2016, H.R 6416, the Jeff Miller-Blumenthal Veterans Health Care and Benefits Act 2016 which included S.901, the toxic exposure research legislation, language along with

several other veteran-related bills. H.R. 6416 was signed into law by President Obama on December 16th, now P.L. 114-315, will empower the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into an agreement with the National Academy of Medicine – formerly the Institute of Medicine – or a similar non-governmental organization to conduct “an assessment of scientific research relating to the descendants of individuals with toxic exposure.”

P.L. 114-315 will now go through the, implemented process as defined in the bill based on Title 38 U.S. Code of Federal Regulations. The next step will be to ensure that the provision of this new law provides the research to help save the next generation of veterans and their families.

On November 11, 2016, at the National Veterans Day Ceremony, Arlington Cemetery on behalf of AVVA laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.