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November, 1982

*Agent  
Orange*

VETERANS NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

Cooper T. Holt  
Executive Director  
VFW Washington Office

The VA has contracted with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to undertake the study on the effects of Agent Orange and other herbicides.

The VFW several years ago was the first veterans organization to push for the study to be done by an agency separate from the VA.

The VFW also was the first group to call for compensation for disabilities which could have been caused by these defoliants used in Vietnam. Payments should be made now while the study is being done.

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The American Medical Association has advised their members to be alert for adverse effects in patients exposed to dioxin which is in the herbicide Agent Orange.

Spray programs using that defoliant have been used in the United States for forestry control as well as in Vietnam during the war.

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Veterans who obtained GI loans when interest rates were high can now refinance these loans at today's lower rate without regard to the amount of entitlement they may have remaining.

This new program has become popular since the GI rate has dropped to new lows.

The procedures are simple and fast. No appraisal is required by the VA, but the refinancing will cost discount points.

The VFW strongly backed this provision in the law because it may help veterans reduce their monthly payments considerably.

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The Congress recently returned 13 weeks of federal employment benefits after a four week waiting period to many jobless former servicemen.

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Before this new law, only those who were involuntarily discharged could receive unemployment benefits. Those with honorable discharges were barred from receiving unemployment compensation as an inducement to remain in the service.

The VFW brought this injustice to the attention of Congress and the law was changed to give most prior servicemen benefits if they are unemployed after their first term of service.

Thousands of military retirees who work for or retired a second time from a civil service job after 1956 will have their civilian annuities adjusted upward, thanks to the VFW and Congress.

Retirees who combined their military and civilian federal service for retirement purposes lost credit for the military portion under Social Security for payments made after 1956 when they reached age 62.

The new law, backed by the VFW, eliminated that provision and double-retirees will have their annuities recomputed.

Current employees will be allowed to pay seven percent of their military annuity into the civil service retirement fund and will not be subject to the offset at age 62.

Regulations are being published by the government.