

# LAVAN & NEIDENBERG NEWSLETTER

Volume 4, Issue 3

www.DisabilityLawClaims.com

1-888-234-5758

March 2012

## Agent Orange Exposure Designations Expand Veterans stationed in Thailand may qualify

The Department of Veterans Affairs has recently determined that in light of declassified records from the Department of Defense, soldiers stationed in Thailand during the Vietnam War may now be qualified as combat-related disabled from exposure to herbicides.

Agent Orange is the most commonly known herbicide used during the Vietnam War in several areas of Southeast Asia. Doctors have found numerous disabling conditions related to exposure to this chemical, including diabetes, cancers, and other chronic illnesses.

Originally, Agent Orange exposure was only approved for veterans who were stationed directly in Vietnam where the defoliant chemical was sprayed over the jungles on a regular basis. However, recently released documentation has expanded the number of areas where veterans could have come in contact with Agent Orange, prompting thousands of Vietnam veterans to reassess the cause of their disabling conditions.

Soldiers who were stationed at Thailand military bases such as the Royal Thai Air Force Bases in U-Tapao, Ubon, Nakhon Phanom, Udorn, Takhli, Korat and Don Muang may be approved as being exposed to herbicides if they were stationed between February 28, 1961 and May 7, 1975.

Members of the Military Police at the smaller Army installations in Thailand may also qualify if their Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) placed them on or near the base perimeter.



### Tips for Thailand Veterans Applying for VA Disability

Your MOS documentation is one of the key components needed for showing that you were stationed in an area that would have exposed you to base perimeter herbicide use. You will need these records, along with your doctor's diagnosis of your disabling condition and your VA disability rating to file your claim for veterans' disability benefits.

Many Thailand-area Vietnam veterans may have difficulty with their MOS because they were appointed criminal investigation duties rather than regular base security duties. This could have still resulted in exposure to use of Agent Orange at the base's exterior, and it will take your own personal accounts to provide evidence to support this fact.

### Don't Jeopardize Your Claim – Get Professional Help!

Providing supporting evidence for your veterans' disability benefits claim can be difficult, especially if you're unsure what the VA is looking for in an acceptable claim. Our attorneys have helped many Vietnam veterans prove their disabling conditions were caused by herbicide exposure, and we can help you, too!

Whether you're applying for veterans' disability benefits for the first time or you've received a notice of denial and wish to appeal the decision, The Law Offices of LaVan & Neidenberg, P.A. are here to help. We can represent your claim from application to appeal while taking on the burden of preparing all the documentation. Before making a decision, request a copy of our [FREE guide to winning your veterans' disability claim](#). To schedule a no cost case evaluation, [contact us today](#) – 1-888-234-5758.

## Also in this issue...

### Page 2

- The 2012 Tax Season and your Disability Benefits
- 4 Recent Changes in SSDI
- Health News: Stem Cell Treatment for Macular Degeneration

### Page 3

- March Calendar of Events
- Fast 5 for Spring Cleaning
- Healthy Recipe: Kale Salad

## The 2012 Tax Season and Your Disability Benefits

### *You May Qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit*

April 17 is fast approaching and you'll need to make sure your income is properly reflected on your tax return. **If you receive any kind of disability benefits from the Social Security Administration you will need to claim them when filing this year's taxes.**

If you receive SSDI or SSI benefits and are under the retirement age of 65 this is considered Earned Income. This amount can be claimed as an Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) on your own tax forms.

**Family members of a permanently disabled individual, especially those who serve as caregivers, may also be able to claim their relative on their tax forms.**

Not all disabled individuals who receive Social Security disability benefits will qualify for the EITC. The Internal Revenue Service takes into account many parameters, including your income and resources when determining your yearly taxes and these factors may impact your ability to claim certain tax credits.

### **Where to Get Tax Help**

While the SSA does not provide tax help, the IRS will. If your Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) is below \$54,000 you may qualify for their Free File program which will help you submit your tax return electronically and set up the best method to receive your tax return.

Some IRS offices also offer on-site assistance for those with disabilities. **You can contact your local IRS office to find out about what services are available to you or your family members who suffer from a disabling condition and collect Social Security disability benefits.**

Some communities offer free tax clinics to help residents prepare their documents for filing. Contact city hall or your resident services department for information on any assistance programs that you may benefit from.

Of course, there's also a wide network of tax professionals that serve clients in all states. There are national companies like H&R Block with branches across the U.S., and there also are local professionals who may be able to provide in-home services if a disabled individual cannot come to their office to do paperwork.

Remember, if you ever have questions about your Social Security disability benefits or need to appeal a decision you'll want to seek a Florida disability attorney!

## 4 RECENT CHANGES IN SSDI

### *New research shows changes in the SSDI populations*

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) is one of the main types of disability benefits individuals may seek when they suffer from a disabling condition that prevents them from working. In recent years, several new factors have altered the world of SSDI benefits:

- **Baby Boomers** – more Americans are reaching what is known as the “disability age” where many age-related disabling conditions begin to appear.
- **Early Life Disability** – many younger claimants are also filing for disability benefits which can be difficult for those with new families or little work experience.
- **Working Women** – with more women in the workforce, more are covered by SSDI benefits which increases the ability for many to qualify for disability ratings should their condition apply.
- **Gender Equality** – in the past it was considered more likely for men to suffer from a disability rather than women, but in recent years the gap has closed with both genders equally as likely to develop a disabling condition.

**All of these issues can complicate matters when you apply for Social Security disability benefits. This is where a South Florida disability attorney can help!**

## HEALTH NEWS

### *Stem Cell Treatment for Macular Degeneration*

Blindness is a special case when applying for Social Security disability benefits as it can be fast-tracked for approval and also has different compensation rates.

Macular degeneration is a condition that can cause total blindness over time, but new treatments are helping slow the progression of the disease and even improving the vision of some patients.

Using stem cells, doctors have developed a treatment that has helped patients with Stargardt's macular dystrophy and age-related macular degeneration (AMD) improve their vision.

More research will need to be conducted before the treatment is approved but doctors are hopeful that this can lead to the development of methods that will help prevent the disease from progressing to vision loss if caught and treated early enough.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March is filled with many important dates to remember. Here are a few:

### HUG A G.I. DAY – SUNDAY, MARCH 4, 2012

Show our military men and women you care with a big hug on this day! While there are many days to honor the members of individual military branches this day it doesn't matter if you're Army, Navy, Marine Corps, National Guard, Coast Guard, or Reservist – you deserve a hug!

### NATIONAL PI DAY – WEDNESDAY, MARCH 14, 2012

The numerical value of Pi, 3.14 correlates with this calendar day, making it the perfect day to indulge in a slice of pie! Bake a pie, share a pie with friends, or just grab some pie on the go. Sweet pies, savory pies, and remember pizza is a pie, too!

### IDES OF MARCH – THURSDAY, MARCH 15, 2012

On this day in 44 B.C. Julius Caesar was assassinated by conspirators. "Ides" refers to the middle of the month and only gained specific notoriety in the month of March due to a soothsayer's warning to Caesar: "Beware the Ides of March" as a prediction of his murder.

### ST. PATRICK'S DAY – SATURDAY, MARCH 17, 2012

Everyone's a little bit Irish on this holiday which originally celebrated St. Patrick and his efforts to bring the Christian religion to Ireland in the 400s. In modern times it is a day to celebrate the Irish heritage with food, music, and festivals. Green beer is a popular drink and dinners of corned beef and cabbage are common on many tables.

### INTERNATIONAL EARTH DAY – MARCH 20, 2012

Not to be confused with the U.S. Earth Day, this day was designated by the UN Secretary General U. Thant as an international observance in 1971.

### MARCH IS ALSO...

- National Irish American Heritage Month
- National Women's History Month
- National Nutrition Month
- The start of Daylight Savings on Sunday, March 11 – Don't forget to spring ahead one hour!

### CELEBRATE SOCIAL WORKERS MONTH IN MARCH

Social workers are a vital part of the disability claims process as they often provide services to help those with disabilities seek vital resources and information. Social workers are present in many government offices and local organizations and help those in need in many ways such as financial planning, family management, job placement, and health care.

## Fast 5 for Spring Cleaning

### 5 ideas for Your Spring Cleaning Plans

If you're ready to de-clutter and clean up after the winter blues are gone, it's time to start thinking Spring Cleaning! Here are 5 ideas to maximize your cleaning efforts:

- **Create a plan.** Don't just randomly start shuffling around the house, progress room by room with a plan of action. Create areas for items to be thrown out, donated, or relocated and remove them before breaking out the mop and bucket!
- **Decide on a destination.** All of the items you're getting rid of don't need to go in the trash. Consider a yard sale or donating to a thrift store or non-profit organization. You'll get rid of old items and potentially make a dollar or two, or at least donate to a good cause!
- **Get everyone involved.** Don't let the kids run off without doing their share. A good incentive for getting your child to clean up their own room is to have them get rid of old toys and have their own table at your yard sale. Anything they sell could be used to buy them a new toy!
- **Break it up.** Don't try to do everything at once. Make sure to take frequent breaks between big cleaning jobs, especially if you're using chemicals. A little fresh air will reenergize your cleaning spirit!
- **Out with the old, in with the new.** After you've cleaned out and tidied up your living space, why not get a little something new to celebrate? To keep clutter to a minimum, consider things like new houseplants or fresh flowers to brighten your space.

### HEALTHY RECIPE: WARM KALE SALAD

Kale is a superfood – a leafy green veggie packed with protein that can be served in many ways. The leaves can a bit bitter but the lemon and olive oil in this salad mellow things out while still packing a flavorful punch!

- 2 bunches finely chopped kale
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 2 Tbsp. lemon juice
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. ground pepper
- 1/2 tsp. salt

Bring a pot of water to a boil and add kale, stirring occasionally for 5 minutes. While the kale boils, mix together all other ingredients in a small bowl. Drain the kale and transfer into a large serving bowl. Toss with dressing and let stand for 2 minutes before serving. This salad is also good cold the next day and would make a great green side to accompany your corned beef dinner on St. Patrick's Day!!