

NCOA National Capital Office
December 29, 2011

The following was announced by The Department of Veterans Affairs

**Rules Liberalized for Veterans with Undiagnosed Illnesses
Application Window Extended for Five Years**

WASHINGTON – Veterans of the Persian Gulf War with undiagnosed illnesses have an additional five years to qualify for benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

“Not all the wounds of war are fully understood,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “When there is uncertainty about the connection between a medical problem and military service, Veterans are entitled to the benefit of the doubt.”

A recent change in VA regulations affects Veterans of the conflict in Southwest Asia. Many have attributed a range of undiagnosed or poorly understood medical problems to their military services. Chemical weapons, environmental hazards and vaccinations are among the possible causes.

At issue is the eligibility of Veterans to claim VA disability compensation based upon those undiagnosed illnesses, and the ability of survivors to qualify for VA’s Dependency and Indemnity Compensation.

Under long-standing VA rules, any undiagnosed illnesses used to establish eligibility for VA benefits must become apparent by Dec. 31, 2011. The new change pushes the date back to Dec. 31, 2016.

Veterans or survivors who believe they qualify for these benefits should contact VA at 1-800-827-1000.

Further information about undiagnosed illnesses is available online at www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar and www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/oefoif/index.asp