



# Butler County Veterans Service Commission

Veterans Serving Veterans

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## Another Year, Come and Gone



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The Butler County Veterans Service Commission would like to extend a happy new year and a heartfelt thank you to all veterans and their families! This agency has grown exponentially in the number of veterans and dependents that have walked through our doors to receive assistance from our agency and it is all because of you!

2019 was a successful year for our agency in assisting veterans obtain their benefits through the Department of Veterans Affairs, providing financial assistance to those in need due to unexpected hardships and administering transportation to those in need of transportation to VA medical appointments. It has been a record breaking year with the agency serving over 6,000 veterans and dependents with the number continuing to grow through 2020!

With the new year comes a new you! As individuals, we pride ourselves with the ability to start fresh at the beginning of a new year, set goals or resolutions to be a better person, whether in health, spiritual, or being more kind in times of trial or tribulation. Let this new year continue to bring you, your families and loved ones good fortune and health.

Unfortunately, just because it's a new year does not mean our troubles as a nation will cease. Thirty-five members of the Armed Forces died in service to this admirable and great nation in 2019. Another 6,000 veterans and current service members committed suicide. But let us not forget any of these individuals; grieve in their absence, celebrate their life and continue to pray and help those still serving or suffering here back home in the states.

We, at the Butler County Veterans Service Commission extend our love and support for all veterans and dependents. Thank you and Happy New Year!



## News from the Department of Veterans Affairs

### VA announces proposal to increase access to dental care

**WASHINGTON** – Today the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it has submitted to Congress a waiver request and pilot program under Section 152 of the VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act of 2018 ([MISSION Act](#)) to improve access to dental care for Veterans.

The MISSION Act authorizes VA to submit statutory waivers to Congress for the purpose of testing innovative service delivery models to improve the quality of care for America's Veterans. Under existing statute, VA has limited authority to provide dental services for Veterans. With this waiver request, VA is submitting a proposal to increase access to dental services for enrolled Veterans ineligible for dental services through VA by connecting them with community-based, pro bono or discounted dental service providers.

“The MISSION Act gave Veterans real choice over their healthcare decisions,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert L. Wilkie. “Through this pilot proposal, we want to ensure Veterans have access to quality dental care through a network of providers who are proud to serve America's heroes.”

Poor oral health can have a significant negative effect on overall health. Clinical research has found possible connections between gum problems and heart disease, bacterial pneumonia, and stroke. Upon approval of this pilot, VA will work with groups such as the American Dental Association and Federally Qualified Health Centers across the U.S. to offer pro bono and discounted dental services to Veterans.

“This waiver submission opens the door to years of groundbreaking innovation under the MISSION Act to improve care for our Veterans, who are top of mind for this President and this Administration every single day,” said Director Joe Grogan of the White House Domestic Policy Council.

Section 152 of the MISSION Act led VA to establish a Center for Care and Payment Innovation to test payment and service delivery models, with the goal of reducing expenditures while preserving or enhancing the quality of care for Veterans. In implementing this section, the Secretary was granted authority to waive statutory requirements that may impede innovative approaches upon notification of and approval from Congress. The dental care proposal, titled the Care Coordination for Dental Benefits demonstration project under the Community Provider Collaborations for Veterans Pilot Program, is the first waiver request and pilot program submitted to Congress under this authority.

The VA Innovation Center, led by Michael Akinyele, is implementing Section 152 of the VA MISSION Act under the Office of Enterprise Integration. VA published a proposed rule ([RIN 2900-AQ56](#)) establishing the Center for Innovation for Care and Payment on July 29, 2019 (84 FR 36507). VA published a final rule implementing its authority on October 25, 2019; this rule became effective on November 25, 2019. “This pilot program enables us to explore leading practices across the U.S. health care system to meet Veterans needs today and into the future,” said Dr. Melissa S. Glynn, Assistant Secretary for Enterprise Integration.



## Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act claims now being determined

**WASHINGTON** — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will begin deciding claims for the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019 at 12:01 a.m., Philippine Standard Time, Jan. 1, 2020. The Philippines is the farthest east VA regional benefits office.

The Act extends the presumption of herbicide exposure, that include toxins such as Agent Orange, to Veterans who served in the offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam War.

Signed into law Jun. 25, the law specifically affects Blue Water Navy (BWN) Veterans who served no more than 12 nautical miles offshore of the Republic of Vietnam between Jan. 6, 1962 and May 7, 1975, as well as Veterans who served in the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between Jan. 1, 1967 and Aug. 31, 1971. These Veterans can now apply for disability compensation and other benefits if they have since developed one of 14 conditions that are presumed to be related to exposure to herbicides. Veterans do not need to prove that they were exposed to herbicides. The specific conditions can be found by searching the term “Agent Orange” on [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov).

“For six months, VA worked diligently to gather and digitize records from the National Archives and Records Administration to support faster claims decisions,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “These efforts will positively impact the claims process for Veterans filing for these benefits.”

To be eligible a Veteran must have served in the identified locations during the specified time period and currently have a condition(s) associated with herbicide exposures, such as Agent Orange. Blue Water Navy claims are being processed under current prioritization criteria; however, special priority is being given to Veterans who are over the age of 85 or have a terminal condition. Qualifying recipients include affected Veterans who are still living and certain survivors of deceased BWN and Korean DMZ Veterans.

Survivors can file claims for benefits based on the Veteran’s service if the Veteran died from at least one of the 14 presumptive conditions associated with herbicides such as Agent Orange. The law also provides benefits for children born with spina bifida if their parent is or was a Veteran with certain verified service in Thailand during a specific period.



### Focus on Staff: Service Officer Mike Farmer

Mike Farmer is a Service Officer with Butler County Veterans Service Commission. He received an A.A. with a Business Concentration, in addition to a B.S in Information Technology from Miami University. With the societal change in technology, Mike brings new technical expertise to serve the veterans and their family members. In addition to serving as a Service Officer, he is the Commander of AMVETS Post 1983 in Hamilton, OH. Serving as Commander affords him to opportunity to serve veterans both while at work and in his off time.

Before using his VA Education Benefits at Miami University, Mike served in the United States Marine Corps. After graduating from Parris Island he was assigned to serve at Camp Lejeune North Carolina. He continually volunteers his time to assist veterans in their transitions. Beginning as a Co-Adviser to the Student Veterans Association on the Hamilton Campus, Mike has become a leader within Butler County and is a strong advocate for veterans affairs.



315 High Street, 1st Floor  
Hamilton, OH 45011

78 North Breiel Boulevard  
Middletown, OH 45042

Phone: 513-887-3600 (Hamilton)  
513-425-8600 (Middletown)  
Fax: 513-887-3519 (Hamilton)  
513-217-4846 (Middletown)

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Veterans Service Commission



The Butler County Veterans Service Commission is an agency that provides veterans and their dependents reliable and professional service in providing advocacy and assistance in obtaining veterans benefits, temporary financial assistance, and transportation to VA appointments. The Butler County Veterans Service Commission works closely with our community partners to best meet the needs of the veteran families that we service, thus helping to improve the lives of veterans and their families residing within Butler County.

**Upcoming Events:**

If you would like us to come to your organization to find out about the services we provide, please call us 513-887-3600. We are always open to community events and spreading the word to veterans and their families.

**Honoring the Fallen:**



**Sgt. 1st Class Michael J Goble**

Died December 22, 2019 Serving During Operation Freedom's Sentinel

33, of Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, died Dec. 22, 2019, of injuries sustained during combat operations in Kunduz province, Afghanistan. The incident is under investigation. Goble was a senior intelligence sergeant assigned to Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group. His awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters, the Army Commendation Medal with Valor device, the Valorous Unit Award, the Special Forces Tab, Combat Infantryman's Badge, Basic Airborne and Military Free Fall Jumpmaster badges.