



# VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR, INC

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Dear VVAW Supporter,

**I'd like to thank you for your continued support of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW).** Without you, we could not continue the important work that we do 45 years after we first gathered to protest the Vietnam War. After this November's elections, we have much to celebrate as grassroots organizing efforts turned out voters for justice. But we still have much to fight for. My name is Bill Branson and I am currently a National Coordinator for Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). I joined the Army Security Agency as a Morse Interceptor in 1966. I served overseas in both Panama and Vietnam, also working as a Ground to Air Radio Operator. I joined VVAW in 1970 after the Jackson and Kent State massacres and have been a member ever since. I participated in Dewey Canyon III, have been on VVAW's National Staff, and now serve as a National Coordinator.

**Vietnam Veterans Against the War is celebrating 45 years of organizing for veterans, peace and justice.** We would not be here 45 years later without your sustaining support. This November, we witnessed a historic moment with President Obama's win for his second term in the presidential election. Thank you for voting and standing up against racism, sexism, and homophobia. Our votes collectively elected the most number of women to Congress than ever before, including the first openly gay Senator, the first Asian American Senator, and Iraq War veteran Tammy Duckworth. These progressive shifts mean real, concrete improvements in people's lives are possible. Last September, the Veterans Job Corps Act failed in the Senate by only 2 votes.

While the outcome of November's elections is monumental, we must still keep up the struggle for peace and justice. Within a day of the elections, the mainstream media switched gears to the looming "fiscal cliff," another opportunity for politicians to use scare tactics against the will of the people. The outcome of the negotiations to avoid the "fiscal cliff" will affect every one of us, just as the results of the election affected every one of us. They particularly affect veterans, especially Vietnam-era veterans, who are now retiring. Some politicians, on both sides, want to raise the retirement age (affecting when you could collect your earned Social Security benefits) and alter the Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) calculation, that determines how much both Social Security AND Veterans' benefits increase (or don't increase) every year to keep up with inflation. **Take action by contacting your Senators and Representative** – tell them to keep their hands off Social Security and Veteran's benefits – by calling the US Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121.

VVAW also stands in solidarity with Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) in calling for an accelerated withdrawal out of Afghanistan. After more than 10 years and nearly \$600 billion spent in a continuous occupation, it is clear that this war has neither an exit plan nor any real benefit for the people of Afghanistan or the United States. More than 2,000 GIs have lost their lives and tens of thousands of Afghans have been killed or wounded. Add to this the hidden wounds of wars that both our GIs and veterans and the Afghan people experience. As President Obama prepares for his second term, the Pentagon is recommending our continued military presence in Afghanistan. The time is now to pressure members of Congress to bring our troops home and end the occupation before 2014. **Visit [www.ivaw.org](http://www.ivaw.org) to find out how you can take action.**

VVAW's struggle for veterans, peace and justice began in 1967. We have been actively involved in many issues over the last 45 years including work around Agent Orange and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). VVAW has been instrumental in organizing around Post-Vietnam Syndrome (PVS), now known as PTSD. When VVAW first tried to approach the problem

of PVS back in the late 1960s, we built the "rap" groups knowing that vets would talk more easily with other vets. We did this without benefit of consultants or VA psychiatrists – because we knew it needed to be done. VVAW was one of the first groups to deal with what doctors and psychologists now call PTSD. At the time the Veterans Administration (VA), older vets' groups, and the government were denying its existence but VVAW knew it was real because we had to deal with it on a daily basis. It wasn't until late in 1980 that the VA "discovered" PTSD and slowly began to acknowledge it by offering treatment and compensation for GI and veterans suffering from PTSD.

Forty-five years later, VVAW's Military and Veteran Counseling Service provides free direct services, including counseling as well as legal, medical, and mental health referrals for GIs, veterans, and their families. **Your financial support directly sustains this program.** VVAW's Trauma/Mental Health Counselor, Johanna (Hans) Buwalda, helps GIs, veterans, and their families near her in the greater Chicago area and all over the US by providing counseling in person, over the phone and through email. She also works with other mental health providers across the country to help expand the network of providers who work with veterans. At the end of October, she was well received when she presented at the American Public Health Association's (APHA) annual conference in San Francisco. Her presentation centered on the public health implications of veterans with service-connected mental health problems, who have received other-than-honorable discharges instead of treatment. Less than a week after this important conference, Hans traveled to Baltimore for the Iraq Veterans Against the War's (IVAW) convention to provide support to the veterans in attendance.

VVAW also helped staff the 17<sup>th</sup> annual Winter Stand Down in Chicago on November 8 with the VA, Viet-Now, VFW, and IVAW. Over 700 homeless veterans received free winter clothing, flu shots, haircuts, warm lunches, and the opportunity to connect with area services. **This is another way VVAW is helping to carry on the struggle for peace and justice for veterans of all generations.**

In these hard times, we understand the demands on everyone's limited resources. **So, we are deeply thankful when our members and supporters make tax-deductible donations to VVAW's work, at whatever level.** These donations enable us to maintain our free counseling services, issue our free semi-annual newspaper, and sustain our continued organizing efforts to achieve decent benefits for all veterans and oppose unnecessary and illegal wars waged by our country, now and into the future. **Take this opportunity to make an end-of-the-year tax-deductible donation before December 31 so that you can claim it on this year's tax return.** We thank all of you for your continued support. On behalf of VVAW's staff and national coordinators, I hope you have a safe and wonderful New Year!

Sincerely,



Bill Branson, VVAW National Coordinator

I am sending Vietnam Veterans Against the War \$35 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 Other to support its work for peace and for decent benefits for all veterans. Donations to VVAW are tax deductible. You can also donate online at [www.vvaw.org](http://www.vvaw.org), a one-time or monthly donation.

Name (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address (please print clearly) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_