



VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR, INC

PO Box 355, Champaign, IL 61824-0355 (773) 569-3520

www.vvaw.org
vvaw@vvaw.org

March 2021

"We who have come here to Washington have come here because we feel we have to be winter soldiers now. We could come back to this country; we could be quiet; we could hold our silence; we could not tell what went on in Vietnam, but we feel because of what threatens this country, the fact that the crimes threaten it, no reds, and not redcoats but the crimes which we are committing that threaten it, that we have to speak out."

—John Kerry, April 22, 1971

Dear Friends,

Last time we talked with you, we were breathing a sigh of relief that Trump had been defeated at the polls. While completely aware of his toxic influence, we were still taken aback by the fury of his insurrectionists on January 6. In response, VVAW issued a statement "Fascism is Not an Option" (<http://www.vvaw.org/commentary/?id=3937>). We encourage members to be vigilant. The Right has not given up. The Trump cult is active and very dangerous.

We are encouraged by the fast pace President Biden is undoing the damage of the Trump years, but we need to apply pressure where and when we can to advocate for peace, justice, and veterans' rights. After seeing how effective the VA has been in getting the COVID-19 vaccines to us, we know how much more it can do if we reverse the attacks and push for change.

We hope that newly appointed VA Secretary Denis McDonough can help fix and improve the VA. We need to encourage our elected representatives and Secretary McDonough to do the following

- * Reverse the privatization of the VA, including restoring or building VA clinics and Vet Centers in areas relegated to privatized care.
- * Fill all VA staff vacancies.
- * Pursue a program of VA expansion.
- * Restore the offices and access to the Veterans Service Officers from the various Vets organizations and VA employee union reps.
- * Forgive the debts that the VA failed to bill for during the COVID crisis. NO surprise bills for Vets!
- * Expand the COVID vaccinations to the immediate families of Veterans. This is a good way to illustrate why we need medical care like the VA for everybody!

Also, we urge VA Secretary Denis McDonough to re-examine a proposed Trump-era regulation that would unjustly freeze out thousands of veterans from VA benefits. Specifically, the rule would hamper the ability of veterans with less-than-honorable discharges to access VA care and support. This population is disproportionately composed of veterans of color, veterans with mental health conditions, veterans at risk of suicide, and LGBTQ+ veterans.

We also need to pressure President Biden and Congress to end the Forever Wars.

- * Bring the troops home, from the Middle East, Afghanistan and the 250 secret bases in Africa,

and around the world.

* Provide all "downsized" GIs with FREE education, fully paid, including a stipend for living expenses. That means all the way through a doctorate degree. Oh, and no time limits.

* When these troops come home, put them to work on the COVID pandemic.

We know this is a lot. But, better we go for it, than sit back and let them keep destroying the VA, making GIs kill for someone's profit, and condemning vets to a lifetime of debt penury for getting an education. Not to mention letting vets watch their families die, because vaccination in the public sector is so FUBAR.

Contact your elected representatives. Write your local papers. We must make sure the voices for veterans, peace, and justice are not silenced.

VVAW is collecting the stories, photos, and videos of 1971 in an easy-to-access location on our website. We would like you to add your stories, for publication on our website and possibly in *The Veteran* as well. To leave your memories and view our collection, go to: www.vvaw.org/1971_50years/

Especially during this time, don't forget your friends and comrades in the struggle. Everyone who can needs to reach out and give a call or email or zoom or whatever. We can't let this current period push any of our friends over the edge. Let's make ourselves available!

We are deeply thankful when our members and supporters make tax-deductible donations to VVAW's work, at whatever level. Your contributions to VVAW help us keep distributing *The Veteran*, to our members, friends, and supporters. Your donations also keep our website going, where we have every issue of VVAW's newspaper online as well as archives of many other articles, photos, and videos. Your donations allow us to make VVAW's legacy not only accessible to all through our website but also to archive them for generations to come. We thank all of you for your continued support.

In solidarity,



Bill Branson
VVAW Board member

I am sending Vietnam Veterans Against the War \$35 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 Other to support its work for peace, justice, and for decent benefits for all veterans. Donations to VVAW are tax deductible. You can also donate online at www.vvaw.org.

Name (print) _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

E-Mail Address (please print clearly) _____

Phone _____