DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
CHARTER OF THE
RESEARCH ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON
GULF WAR VETERANS' ILLNESSES

1. OFFICIAL DESIGNATION: Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses.

2. AUTHORITY: The Committee is authorized by Public Law 105-368, § 104, and operates under the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, as amended, 5 U.S.C. App. 2.

3. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF ACTIVITY: The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses provides advice and makes recommendations to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on proposed research studies, plans, and strategies related to understanding and treating the health consequences of military service in the Southwest Asia theater of operations during the 1990-1991 Gulf War (Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm). The Committee shall not conduct scientific research or review research proposals submitted to VA prior to funding. VA may, however, request individual Committee members with appropriate scientific expertise to participate in the review of such proposals.

The Committee shall meet in public session to review and advise the Secretary about VA-funded research relevant to understanding and treating the health consequences of military service during the 1990-1991 Gulf War; the processes conducted to solicit, review, and select such VA-funded research; and the methods, results, and implications of the research. The Committee may also review publically available research plans, initiatives, strategies, and activities from other agencies supporting research about the health consequences of military service in the Southwest Asia theater of operations during the 1990-1991 Gulf War. The Committee may advise the Secretary about the relationship between VA-funded research and research supported by other agencies. The Committee shall have access, to the extent provided by law, to VA documents and other information relevant to such reviews.

4. DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES: The Committee shall provide to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, not later than December 1 of each year, an annual report summarizing its activities for the preceding year. The Committee may develop additional reports and recommendations regarding relevant research. All reports and recommendations must be approved by the Committee, in open public session, prior to submission to the Secretary or to other appropriate officials, as directed by the Secretary.

5. OFFICIAL TO WHOM THE COMMITTEE REPORTS: The Committee reports to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

6. OFFICE RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING THE NECESSARY SUPPORT TO THE COMMITTEE: Support for the Committee will be provided by the Veterans Health Administration Office of Research and Development.

7. ESTIMATED ANNUAL OPERATING COSTS IN DOLLARS AND STAFF-YEARS: The annual cost for operating the Committee may not exceed $400,000 per year. This operating cost includes approximately four full-time equivalent staff members who will support the Committee. All Committee members will receive travel expenses and a per diem allowance in accordance with the Federal Travel Regulation for any travel made in connection with their duties as members of the Committee.

8. DESIGNATED FEDERAL OFFICER: The Designated Federal Officer (DFO), a full time VA employee, will approve the schedule of Committee meetings. The DFO or a designee will be present at all meetings, and each meeting will be conducted in accordance with an agenda approved by the DFO. The DFO is authorized to adjourn any meeting when he or she determines it is in the public interest to do so.

9. ESTIMATED NUMBER AND FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS: The Committee is expected to meet at least once and up to three times annually.

10. DURATION: There is a continuing need for the Committee to assist the Secretary in carrying out the responsibilities described in Public Law 105-368, § 104.

11. COMMITTEE TERMINATION DATE: None.

12. MEMBERSHIP AND DESIGNATION: The Committee will be composed of approximately 12 members. Several members may be regular Government employees, but the majority of the Committee's membership will be special Government employees. The Committee membership will include, but is not limited to, Gulf War Veterans, representatives of such Veterans, and members of the medical and scientific communities representing appropriate disciplines such as, but not limited to, epidemiology, immunology, environmental health, neurology, and toxicology.

The Secretary will appoint Committee members for either a 2 or 3-year term of service. The Secretary may reappoint Committee members for additional 1 or 2-year terms. The Secretary will appoint the Chair of the Committee for an initial 2-year term. The Secretary may reappoint the Chair for an additional 1 or 2-year term.

The Secretary may appoint a panel of experts representing appropriate medical and scientific disciplines to assist the Committee in its work. Panelists may be called on by the Secretary for individual advice and consultation, and may advise the Committee on factual or technical aspects research at the request of the Committee chair, but they shall not be members of the Committee. Panelists will be nominated by the Committee chair and appointed by the Secretary.

13. SUBCOMMITTEES: The Committee is authorized to establish subcommittees, with DFO approval, to perform specific projects or assignments as necessary and consistent with its mission. The Committee chair shall notify the Secretary, through the DFO, of the establishment of any subcommittee, including its function, membership, and estimated duration. Subcommittees will report back to the Committee.

14. RECORDKEEPING: Records of the Committee shall be handled in accordance with General Records Schedule 26 or other approved agency records disposition schedules. Those records shall be available for public inspection and copying, subject to the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552.

15. DATE CHARTER IS FILED:

APPROVED: _____ Date: 5/17/2013

Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary of Veterans Affairs