DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
CHARTER OF THE
VETERANS' DISABILITY BENEFITS COMMISSION

A. OFFICIAL DESIGNATION: Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission.

B. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF ACTIVITY: In accordance with Title XV of Public Law 108-136, the Commission shall carry out a study of the benefits under the laws of the United States that are provided to compensate and assist veterans and their survivors for disabilities and deaths attributable to military service. The Commission shall produce a report on the study.

C. PERIOD OF TIME NECESSARY FOR THE COMMISSION TO CARRY OUT ITS PURPOSE: In accordance with Section 590 of Public Law 109-163, the Commission is expected to complete its work not later than October 1, 2007.

D. RECIPIENTS OF THE COMMISSION'S REPORT: The Commission is directed to submit its final report to the President and Congress.

E. AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING NECESSARY SUPPORT TO THE COMMISSION: The Department of Veterans Affairs shall provide all necessary funding support to the Commission. Other support, to include detailing of federal employees, is described in Section 1505 of Public Law 108-136.

F. DUTIES OF THE COMMISSION: The Commission's study shall be a comprehensive evaluation and assessment of benefits provided under current federal laws to compensate veterans and their survivors for disability or death attributable to military service. In carrying out the study, the Commission shall make recommendations concerning the appropriateness of such benefits under existing laws, the appropriateness of the level of such benefits, and the appropriate standard or standards for determining whether a veteran's disability or death should be compensated. The Commission shall also consult with the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences with respect to the medical aspects of contemporary disability compensation policies.

The Commission may hold hearings, take testimony, and receive any evidence it considers advisable to carry out its purposes. The Commission may also secure from any federal department or agency such information as it considers necessary to carry out its purposes.

The Commission shall be composed of 13 members appointed by the President and by the leaders of the Senate and the House of Representatives. Of the 13 total members, not less than 7 shall be veterans who were awarded any of the following decorations: the Medal of Honor, the Distinguished Service Cross, the Navy Cross, the Air Force Cross, and the Silver Star. Members of the Commission shall be appointed for the life of the Commission.

Each member of the Commission who is not an officer or employee of the United States shall be compensated at a rate equal to the daily equivalent of the annual rate of basic pay prescribed for Level IV of the Executive Schedule under section 5315 of title 5, United States Code, for each day during which the member is engaged in the performance of the duties of the Commission. The members of the Commission shall be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for employees of agencies under subchapter 1 of chapter 57 of title 5, United States Code, while away from their homes or regular places of business in the performance of services for the Commission.

G. ESTIMATED ANNUAL OPERATING COSTS IN DOLLARS AND STAFF-YEARS: Operational support for the Commission is estimated at $2 million per year and approximately 8 staff-years. The chair of the Commission may appoint an executive director and such other personnel as may be necessary to enable the Commission to perform its duties. The rate of pay for the executive director and other personnel may not exceed the rate payable for level V of the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of title 5, United States Code.

H. ESTIMATED NUMBER AND FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS: The Commission will meet as often as is necessary to carry out its assigned duties and responsibilities. The Designated Federal Officer (DFO) will approve the schedule of Commission 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.

I. COMMISSION TERMINATION DATE: The Commission shall terminate 60 days after the date on which it submits its final report to the President and Congress.

J. DATE CHARTER IS FILED:

Approved: _____ Date: 2/21/07

R. James Nicholson
Secretary of Veterans Affairs