

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
Charter of the
Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses

1. Advisory Committee's Official Designation. Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses.

2. Authority. The Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses (Committee) is authorized by P.L. 105-368 § 104 and is being renewed in accordance with provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), as amended, 5 U.S.C. ch. 10.

3. Objectives and Scope of Activities. The Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses provides advice and makes recommendations to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (Secretary) 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.

4. Description of Duties. The Committee shall meet in a public session to review and advise the Secretary about VA-funded research relevant to understanding and treating all 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 publicly 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 the Committee's work.

The Committee shall also provide to the Secretary, 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 an open public session, prior to submission to the Secretary or to other appropriate officials, as directed by the Secretary.

5. Agency or Federal Officer Receiving the Advisory Committee's Advice/ Recommendations. The Committee reports to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

6. Support. Support for the Committee will be provided by the VA, Veterans Health Administration's Office of Research and Development.

7. Estimated Annual Operating Costs and Staff Years. The estimated annual cost for operating the Committee is \$500,000 per year. This operating cost includes approximately two 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 (DFO). The Secretary will designate a Federal officer or a full-time VA employee, to be the DFO for the Committee and its subcommittees. The DFO will ensure the Committee activities comply with FACA, FACA Final Rule, VA administrative procedures, and other applicable laws and regulations; approve the schedule and agenda of all Committee and subcommittee meetings; attend all meetings for their duration; fulfill the requirements under section 10(b) of FACA (codified at 5 U.S.C. 1009(b)); adjourn any meeting when the DFO determines it to be in the public interest; chair any meeting when directed by the Secretary; maintain information on Committee activities and provide such information to the public, as applicable; and ensure Committee and subcommittee members receive the appropriate training for efficient operation and compliance with FACA and the FACA Final Rule. The DFO will also ensure a public-facing website is maintained for the Committee according to 41 CFR § 102-3.120(b).

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 P.L. 105-368 § 104. The duration of the Committee is continuing, subject to the Termination section of this document found below.

11. Termination. Unless renewed by appropriate action prior to its expiration, the charter for the Committee will expire 2 years from the date it is filed.

12. Membership and Designation. The Committee will be comprised of up to 14 members. Several members may be Regular Government Employees (RGEs), but the majority of the Committee's membership will be Special Government Employees (SGE). The Committee membership will include, but is not limited to, members of the general public, including Gulf War Veterans and 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 an additional 1 or 2-year term. 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. Members are nominated and appointed in accordance with the Committee Membership Balance Plan.

13. Subcommittees. The Committee is authorized to create 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 creation of any subcommittee, including its function, membership, and estimated duration. Subcommittees will report back to the Committee. Such subcommittees may not work independently and must report their recommendations and advice to the parent committee for full deliberation and discussion. Subcommittees have no authority to make decisions on behalf of the parent Committee, nor can they provide advice or work products directly to VA or any other Federal officer.

14. Recordkeeping. Records of the Committee and subcommittees shall be handled in accordance with the General Records Schedule 6.2 or other approved agency records disposition schedule. Those records shall be available for public inspection and copying, subject to the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552.

15. Filing date.

Approved. _____
/s/Denis McDonough
Secretary of Veterans Affairs

January 7, 2025