

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

Dioxin Use Banned At VA Medical Facilities



VA deputy secretary Hershel Gober



Sen. Thomas Daschle

A GOVERNMENT RELATIONS STAFF REPORT

At the behest of VVA, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jesse Brown has announced a new policy banning the use of 2,4-D at VA medical facilities. The chemical 2,4-D made up 50 percent of the herbicide Agent Orange used in Vietnam and is widely known to cause various health problems. Trace amounts of the contaminant dioxin have been identified in 2,4-D compounds.

"In view of concerns regarding the potential effects of 2,4-D and our efforts to ensure the safest possible environment for veterans, the use of 2,4-D at VA medical facilities will be discontinued," stated Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs Hershel Gober. "Alternative herbicides have been identified which do not contain 2,4-D or other chlorophenoxy compounds."

Sen. Thomas A. Daschle (D-SD) has introduced a bill (S. 338) to extend to December 31, 2003, VA's priority health-care authority for veterans exposed to Agent Orange, to radiation, and for those experiencing Gulf War Syndrome. The bill, modified from that passed by the Senate in 1994, will allow outpatient treatment and adds Gulf War veterans. VVA supported the legislation in the 103rd Congress and will do so again. The bill did not become law at the end of the 103rd session, so VA's current authority to provide priority treatment to these veterans will expire on June 30, 1995. The proposed 2003 closing date would correspond to the duration of the National Academy of Sciences review. Rep. Lane Evans (D-IL) plans to introduce the companion bill in the U.S. House of Representatives in early March.