

CONNECTION



Connecticut Chapter 120

Greater Hartford
Over 38 Years of Service to Veterans

September 2022

Visit Our Website at www.vva120.org

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Meetings

Chapter 120 membership meeting will be held on Thursday, September 1, 2022 at 7:00pm in the Machinists Union Hall, 357 Main St., East Hartford. *State and East Hartford COVID-19 guidelines apply.*

The Board of Directors will meet on Thursday, September 29 at 7:00pm. Call the Chapter office for any changes in schedule. Chapter members are welcomed to attend.

Notice

If you have moved or changed your address, PLEASE notify us immediately. Call the Chapter Newsletter Editor at (860) 282-7470, or e-mail the Newsletter Editor at ctchapter120@aol.com.

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THEIR Sacrifice | OUR Pledge



investigate



recover



identify



returned



National
POW/MIA Recognition Day

September 16, 2022 | [#theirsacrifice](https://twitter.com/theirsacrifice) | www.dpsa.mil



Twenty-five (25) of Connecticut's service members from the Vietnam War are still unaccounted for today. We will never forget.

CHAPTER 120 OFFICE	568-9212
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Patricia Dumin	620-4131
Peter Galgano	828-1999
Ken Lewis	416-5276
Leigh Lovering	528-8312
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Frank Zizzamia, Vice President	569-0705
Roger Anderson, Treasurer	528-4338
Peter Lund, Secretary	644-9770
VVA Service Representatives	
John Cutler	282-7470
E-Mail: VVA.Service.Rep@att.net	
Gerald Fabry, MD	884-7271
E-Mail : gerfab@comcast.net	
Gary Waterhouse	656-0430
E-Mail : gwaterhouse@cox.net	
Membership	
Frank J. Mello, Jr.	604-3879
E-Mail: Fmello336@yahoo.com	
Women Vietnam Veterans	
Patricia Dumin	620-4131
Product Sales	
Leigh Lovering	528-8312
lhlovering@gmail.com	
Newsletter/Website	
John Cutler	282-7470
E-Mail: ctchapter120@aol.com	
Notary Public	
Gary Gazdzicki, Sr.	812-5703
Vet Centers	
Hartford (Area Code 860)	563-8800
New Haven (Area Code 203)	932-9899
Norwich (Area Code 860)	887-1755
Danbury (Area Code 203)	790-4000
All Telephone Numbers are Area Code 860 unless otherwise noted	

Chapter/State News

Hike to Remember

Uniting Veterans to Build Awareness. Build Comradery and Prevent Suicide



On September 10, 2022, 300+ veterans will unite in Glastonbury, Connecticut for a 22k hike.

Why 22 kilometers? In the hearts and minds of these military veterans, it is simply a reminder that they lose 22 veteran and/or active duty brothers and sisters from suicide every day.

Hosting the hike, Marine Corps League (MCL) Det. 40's mission is to unite veterans and service members from all branches and walks of life to enjoy the camaraderie they had shared while serving. Together, they integrate their passion with purpose to combat suicide in the veteran community. Each year's hike is designed to join these forces to support the fight to end veteran suicide and to support veterans and their families as they transition back to civilian life.

PLEASE NOTE: The Hike portion of this event is open to Veterans and Active Duty Service Members only.

MCL Det. 40 is looking for hikers, volunteers and donations. Attire is camies and comfortable walking shoes. They also have spots to ride for those who would like to join but can't walk the 22k.

If someone would just like to donate they can sign up for the hike (it counts as donation) and then email Kevin Mathiau with their name and address, stating they would just like to donate and receive a T-shirt at kmathiau78@gmail.com.

Sign up link. <https://hiketorememberx.itsyourrace.com/register/default.aspx>



Birthday Wishes

Birthday wishes go to our members born in September. May you have many more!

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>Paul H. Abel</i> | <i>Roger H. Anderson</i> |
| <i>James K. Barile</i> | <i>Brian W. Canny</i> |
| <i>Stephen Cole</i> | <i>Rodney Conlogue</i> |
| <i>Michael DeAngelis</i> | <i>Peter J. Donahue</i> |
| <i>Samuel W. Kotsch Jr.</i> | <i>Gary Lee</i> |
| <i>Rene A. Morissette</i> | <i>Arthur E. Noyes</i> |
| <i>John J. O'Boyle</i> | <i>Bruce W. Shewbrooks</i> |
| <i>Robert W. Tocionis</i> | |

A special belated birthday wish goes out to Mary Beaulieu.

Happy Birthday!

Never Again Will One Generation of Veterans Abandon Another

CT Stand Down 2022



The Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) is pleased to announce that they are preparing for their annual Veterans and service members STAND DOWN, which will be held on Friday September 23, 2022 from 8:00am – 2:00pm at four regional locations in Danbury, Bridgeport, Norwich, and at the main campus in Rocky Hill. The DVA continues their commitment to serving Connecticut’s Veterans by providing this “one stop” access to a range of programs and services offered by state and federal agencies, Veterans organizations, and community-based non-profits at regional sites across the State.

Locations

- Danbury** - Danbury War Memorial 1 Memorial Drive
- Bristol** - Bristol Sports Armory 61 Center Street
- Bridgeport** - University of Bridgeport, Wheeler Recreational Center 400 University Ave.
- Norwich** - Easter Seals Veterans Rally Point, 24 Stott Ave.
- Rocky Hill** - CTDVA main campus 287 West Street.

For details, go to: <https://portal.ct.gov/DVA/Pages/Veterans-Stand-Down>

Hot Rod Fall Out XVI



Hot Rod Fall Out car show will take place at the Elks Club grounds in Glastonbury on October 8, 2022. The show donates part of the proceeds from the show to a nonprofit each year. Donations are matched by the Elks Club.

VVA Chapter 120 will be the benefactor this year. These donations could help to increase the funds that can be used for our scholarships.

This show is for cars that date back to 1963 or before and a lot of older owners are themselves vets. From past events, the people who attend are very generous and supportive of different causes.

For details, go to: <http://www.hotrodfallout.com/>

POW/MIA News



National POW/MIA Recognition Day

National POW/MIA Recognition Day is observed annually on the third Friday in September, around a central theme to show commitment to full accountability to the families of captured service members and missing war heroes.

The term POW and MIA mean prisoner of war and military personnel who went missing in action.

Many service members suffered as prisoners during the several wars that have happened throughout the history of the U.S. National POW/MIA Recognition Day was initiated as the day to commemorate with the family of many of the tens of thousands of service members who never made it home.

The day was first observed in 1979 after Congress and the president passed a resolution to make it official following the demands of the families of 2,500 Vietnam War POW/MIAs who asked for accountability in finding their loved ones. It is also mostly associated with service members who were prisoners of war during the Vietnam War.

Regardless of where they are held in the country, National POW/MIA Recognition Day ceremonies share the common purpose of honoring those who were held captive and returned, as well as the memory of those who remain missing in service to the United States.

Until 1979, there was no formal day set aside for these important men and women and the first observance of POW/MIA day included a remembrance ceremony at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. Since then, the Pentagon is where the official observance happens, with other celebrations happening at military bases around the country and elsewhere.



On The Hill



Extracted from Military Times

Biden signs burn pit exposure health bill into law

Millions of veterans are now eligible for expanded health care access and disability benefits related to burn pit smoke and other toxic exposures after President Joe Biden signed the comprehensive new veterans legislation into law on Wednesday, August 10.

In a White House ceremony, Biden called the legislation one of the most important changes to veteran support policies in decades, and said it will provide needed

relief to individuals who are still suffering the wounds of war years after leaving the battlefield.

“This is the most significant law our nation has ever passed to help millions of veterans who were exposed to toxic substances during their military service,” Biden said.

The Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act — better known as the PACT Act — will be phased in over the next few years and provide new support for veterans from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, the first Gulf War, the Vietnam War and a host of smaller deployments across the globe in between those campaigns.

It is expected to total nearly \$300 billion in new spending over the next decade, a figure that caused opposition from some conservative lawmakers in recent months, and will require the Department of Veterans Affairs to hire hundreds of new workers and open several new medical sites to handle the increased workload.

“The PACT Act is the least we can do for the countless men and women ... who suffer toxic exposure while serving their country,” Biden said.

At the event, VA Secretary Denis McDonough shared that the “VA stands ready to implement PACT now,” directing veterans to [VA.gov/PACT](https://www.va.gov/PACT) to learn more.

Who benefits from the PACT Act

Portions of the PACT Act that have garnered the most attention concern illnesses that stem from burn pits that were used in Iraq and Afghanistan to dispose of waste, including office equipment, vehicle parts, medical trash and other potentially toxic items.

For years, veterans’ advocates have chronicled cases of respiratory illnesses and rare cancers among troops returning from those war zones, but have been unable to directly link such ailments to toxic smoke from fires because of a lack of air quality monitoring.

As a result, many have been refused disability benefits from the VA for those sicknesses, claims which, in the past, have required strict scientific evidence to support.

Under this new bill, however, that process will be amended. Any veterans who served in those areas will be granted presumptive status for 23 respiratory illnesses and cancers, speeding up the process to receive benefits — which can total several thousand dollars a month.

The new bill also gives veterans who served in recent wars five more years of medical care coverage under the VA — they currently get five years — regardless of health status. Lawmakers said the extended time should help identify lingering health issues among veterans, which will ideally lead to faster and more reliable care.

Veterans of pre-Global War on Terror conflicts will also see new support under the measure.

The bill removes time restrictions placed on veterans from the first Gulf War while applying for similar toxic exposure benefits, adds hypertension and other conditions to the list of presumptive illnesses caused by Agent Orange exposure during the Vietnam War, and eases filing requirements for veterans exposed to radiation during various deployments around the globe.

The measure would also codify recent changes in how the VA handles future toxic exposure claims, mandating a less rigid approach to the issue. Between 2007 and 2020, over 70 percent of disability claims related to burn pits were reportedly denied by the VA. Advocates claim that fair and fast responses to future war zone dangers could prevent a similar health care and disability fight.

Another requirement directs the VA to launch new studies on veteran health trends and a five-year strategic plan on toxic exposure research that could provide the insight and evidence advocates have been searching for.

“We have every reason to believe that we’re going to see an expansion of the presumptive conditions,” McDonough told Military Times following the ceremony.

The Department of Defense estimates nearly 3.5 million troops who served in recent wars may have endured enough smoke exposure to cause health problems. That figure, combined with help for other generations of veterans included in the PACT Act, means that as many as one in five veterans living in America today could see some benefit from the legislation in coming years.

Leave NO Veteran Behind

Veterans Affairs News



What New Benefits Are Available to Veterans Under the PACT Act?

In what is being described as one of the largest benefit expansions in the history of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the PACT

Act is poised to provide additional benefits and health services to over 5 million veterans.

The Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act, named after a decorated combat medic who died from a rare form of lung cancer, was passed by the Senate, cleared the House and signed into law by the President. The law specifically addresses veterans with toxic exposures during the Vietnam, Gulf War and post 9/11 eras.

Among the benefits included in the measure:

- 20 more illnesses are now considered presumptive conditions for burn pit and other toxic exposures, meaning veterans will not have to prove that their service caused their condition. This reduces the paperwork required and need for a disability exam before being granted access to health care and compensation. The list includes 11 respiratory related conditions and several forms of cancer. Survivors of veterans who died due to one of these conditions may also be eligible for benefits.
- Additional presumptive exposure locations for Vietnam era veterans
- The enrollment period to join VA health care expands. Post 9/11 combat veterans may enroll within 10 years of their discharge date instead of five. For other veterans, a one-year open enrollment period is made to join VA health care without having to demonstrate a service-connected disability.
- VA will provide a toxic exposure screening to every veteran enrolled in VA health care.
- Improvements to research, staff education, outreach and treatment related to toxic exposures

Impact on Gulf War and post-9/11 veterans

- These cancers are newly considered presumptive conditions: Brain, glioblastoma, kidney, melanoma, neck and pancreatic cancers, along with any type of cancer that is gastrointestinal, head-related, lymphatic, lymphoma, reproductive and respiratory.
- Other conditions presumed to be connected to service: Asthma diagnosed after service, chronic bronchitis, chronic COPD, chronic rhinitis, chronic sinusitis, constrictive or obliterative bronchiolitis, emphysema, granulomatous disease, interstitial lung disease, pleuritis, pulmonary fibrosis and sarcoidosis.

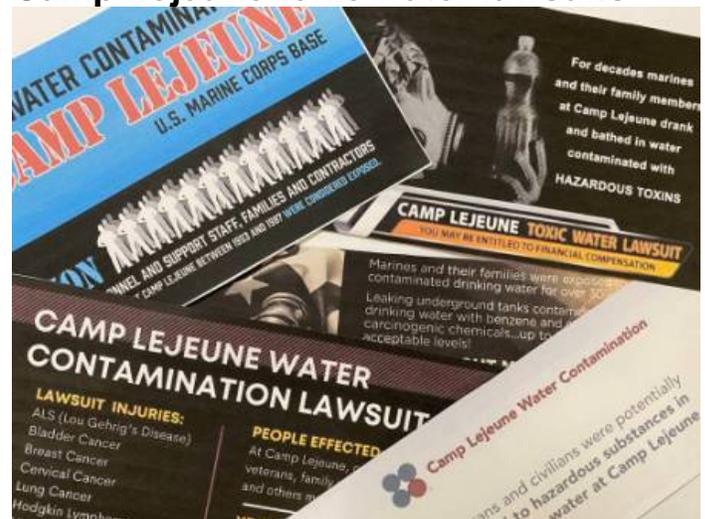
- Post-9/11 veterans who served in these locations are presumed to have been exposed to burn pit toxins: Afghanistan, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Uzbekistan, Yemen — and any airspace above these locations.
- Gulf War and post-9/11 era veterans who served in these locations are presumed to have been exposed to burn pits: Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, the UAE — and any airspace above these countries.

What does the measure mean for Vietnam-era veterans

- New presumptive conditions for Agent Orange include high blood pressure and monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance (MGUS).
- Veterans who served at an additional five locations are now assumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange if they served during specified dates.
- Veterans who were a part of response efforts in three locations are now assumed to have been exposed to radiation if they served during specific dates.

From Military Times

Don't expect quick payouts from Camp Lejeune toxic water lawsuits



The TV ads and colorful mailers have been relentless in recent months: “If you or someone you love served at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune prior to 1988, you may be eligible for financial compensation!”

But advocates are warning that tens of thousands of individuals who lived at the North Carolina base will never see a penny from a new law allowing civil suits against the military for water contamination injuries there.

And those who do get payouts probably won't see any money for months or years.

Shane Liermann, deputy national legislative director at Disabled American Veterans, said, “Veterans need to make sure they're well informed before they make any decisions about getting

involved with these lawsuits, because it could actually cost them money.”

“The last thing we want is for our veterans to see a reduction in their benefits.”

At issue is a provision in the recently passed Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act, better known as the PACT Act.

The measure — signed into law on Aug. 10 — includes almost \$300 billion in new financial benefits for veterans suffering from illnesses caused by burn pit smoke in Iraq and Afghanistan, Agent Orange spraying in Vietnam, and several other military toxic exposure events.

It also contains provisions dubbed the “Camp Lejeune Justice Act,” which allows civil suits against the government for injuries related to water contamination at the Marine Corps base from August 1953 to December 1987. More than one million individuals could be covered by the measure.

Well water contamination problems at the site have been documented for years.

In 2012, Congress passed legislation easing rules for veterans and their family members who developed rare cancers and other sicknesses to receive health care through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

But advocates have said that process doesn’t cover a host of problems or compensate families who already have lost loved ones to illnesses linked to the toxic water.

The new bill will allow them to sue for civil damages, providing a level of financial relief.

“This isn’t automatic payouts,” said Greg Rinckey, founding partner of the firm Tully Rinckey, which specializes in military law. “Individuals are going to have to file lawsuits to get those damages. But for the first time, they can take legal action to get monetary compensation.”

Although passage of the PACT Act was not a certainty until earlier in August, law firms have been anticipating the Lejeune Justice Act would become law since early 2022, and marketing their services to potential would-be clients.

That has raised concerns from veterans advocates, who say many lawyers may be overselling the potential windfall.

Leadership at the Veterans of Foreign Wars in early August issued an explainer for veterans about the flood of legal advertisements, warning that “no one can tell you today exactly how VA will interpret the 150 pages of legislation until VA publishes regulations in the coming months.”

Among the unanswered questions is whether veterans who are eligible for disability payouts and VA health care may lose access to those benefits if they sue the government and win. Coupled with potential attorney fees, that could end up costing individuals more than they receive.

In a statement, Veterans Affairs officials said they will not penalize individuals by denying pending disability claims or cutting services simply for filing a lawsuit related to the Lejeune Justice Act.

But they noted that if a lawsuit is successful, “any award must be offset by the amounts of VA benefits provided in connection with health care or disability relating to exposure to the water at Camp Lejeune.”

Liermann said that is a significant concern.

“A lawsuit as a first step makes sense for some of these family members and relatives who aren’t getting any benefits now, because they have nothing to lose,” he said. “But for veterans who already get some help, there could be a dollar-for-dollar offset.”

Rinckey said that even successful lawsuits are likely to take months or years to complete. He estimates the first payouts from the new law likely won’t materialize until summer 2024 at the earliest, and only for the cases that are easiest to prove: severe injuries with no clear explanation but the poisoned water.

“In order to win these cases, people are going to have to prove not just that they were there, but that they were hurt,” he said. “More than one million people were exposed. But you have to also show injury in order to win the case.”

That means that simply serving at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, during the 25-year eligibility period isn’t enough to guarantee a cash settlement.

For now, veterans groups are urging veterans curious about the lawsuits to file a claim with VA first, to see if they’re eligible for medical care and benefits. That process can take months to complete, but does not carry with it outside lawyer fees.

Liermann said if that does not produce enough help, veterans can still file a lawsuit later, once the legal parameters and process have been more firmly established.

VA has not taken a formal stance on the rush of legal ads related to the water contamination issue, but said that individuals with related questions can contact accredited agents, which include veterans service organizations and other outside groups familiar with the benefits process.

**Receive “The Connection”
by E-Mail – Help your Chapter**

The monthly Chapter 120 newsletter, *The Connection*, is available by e-mail. Currently, 100 members receive the newsletter by e-mail, saving the Chapter over \$1,800 in printing and postal fees annually. The newsletter is available in Adobe format (.pdf), attached to your e-mail. If you wish to receive the newsletter via e-mail, please e-mail the newsletter editor at ctchapter120@aol.com

From the Service Rep's Desk*From Military.com*

Record Pay Increase Likely Coming for Disabled Veterans and Military Retirees in 2023

Military retirees and veterans receiving disability pay from the

Department of Veterans Affairs are likely to see record monthly check increases for the second year running thanks to the pace of inflation, according to new estimates.

The annual VA disability pay and military retirement cost-of-living pay adjustment, known as COLA, is typically tied to the Social Security rate change, which will likely be announced in October. An early projection based on national inflation data by The Senior Citizens League (TSCL), a nonpartisan senior advocacy nonprofit, estimates rates will rise by 9.6%.

Gold Star Mothers' Day September 25, 2022



American Gold Star Mothers, Inc. is registered in the United States Patent Office, Legislative Branch of the United States Congressional Library and the United States World Book Almanac. The original copy of the Federal Charter granted to the American Gold Star Mothers, Inc. was placed in the Archives of Congress.

On June 12th, 1984 the Ninety-Eighth Congress of the United States granted the American Gold Star Mothers, Inc. a charter. Sec. 3 lists the objects and purposes for which the corporation is organized, shall be those provided in its articles of

incorporation, and shall include a continuing commitment, on a national basis.

- Keep alive and develop the spirit that promoted world services.
- Maintain the ties of fellowship born of that service, and to assist and further all patriotic work.
- Inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, State, and Nation.
- Assist veterans of World War I, World War II, the Korean Conflict, Vietnam, and other strategic areas and their dependents in the presentation of claims to the Veterans' Administration, and to aid in any way in their power the men and women who served and died or were wounded or incapacitated during hostilities.
- Perpetuate the memory of those whose lives were sacrificed in our wars.
- Maintain true allegiance to the United States of America.
- Inculcate lessons of patriotism and love of country in the communities in which we live.
- Inspire respect for the Stars and Stripes in the youth of America.
- Extend needful assistance to all Gold Star Mothers and, when possible, to their descendants.
- To promote peace and good will for the United States and all other Nations.

From Vietnam Magazine

The M54 Gun Truck

On Sept. 2, 1967, a Viet Cong company ambushed an 8th Transportation Group truck convoy outside Pleiku in South Vietnam's Central Highlands. The truckers' pre-deployment trainers instructed them to travel close together for mutual support and stop to fight if ambushed, which made all 37 trucks stationary targets inside the enemy's kill zone. As a consequence, 30 trucks were damaged or destroyed, seven Americans were killed and 17 wounded. The Army responded by changing its convoy tactics and creating gun trucks, which innovative GIs transformed with ad hoc changes into even better combat vehicles.



The M54 5-ton gun truck was the most common transport vehicle converted. The first conversions used a truck-bed mounted compartment for two machine guns. The crews usually placed an M60 7.62 mm forward and an M2 .50-caliber in the

rear. Early gun compartments had double walls constructed of 2-inch-by-12-inch planks with sandbags placed between the walls. Quarter-inch steel plates were mounted on the cabin doors and the windshield.

Crews constantly modified and improved their trucks according to their imaginations and construction skills. Airfield landing mats replaced wooden planking in most gun compartments by 1970. Many carried additional M60s and M2s on ring and pintle mountings. Some even had a commander's cupola mounted on an M113 armored personnel carrier hull installed over the truck bed.

Typically, one gun truck was assigned for every 10 transport trucks. During ambushes, the gun trucks responded to enemy fire while the convoy accelerated through the attack site. By 1969, more than 100 gun trucks served with the Army's eight transport battalions in Vietnam. They saw extensive combat in a war where there were no front lines and nearly every highway was a potential danger zone. Two Army gun truck crewmen, Sgt. William W Seay and Spc. 4 Larry G. Dahl, were awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously for heroism in fights against enemy forces that ambushed their convoys.

Newsletter articles/ stories/photos
Any articles, stories and/or photos submitted for the newsletter must be received by the "cut off" date for any given month. Photos must be accompanied by text which describes the event, names, dates and any other pertinent facts so our readers understand the story behind the photo(s). The newsletter editor will announce the "cut off" dates at each Chapter meeting. The "cut off" date for our October newsletter is 23 September 2022. Due to space availability, the editor reserves the right to include or not include photos for a given month.

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**97B Pierson Lane
Windsor, CT
print@printhubct.com
www.printhubct.com
860-580-7907**

Helping Hands for Our Fellow Veterans

Won't You Please Give a Helping Hand to a Brother or Sister Veteran?

Several veterans have contacted Chapter 120 asking for help in paying the most basic of needs for themselves and their families. These veterans are those who do not qualify for regular federal, state or local assistance – they fall into that financial category where they make too much to qualify for assistance, but not enough to afford basic needs for their families, like food, fuel for heat, or clothing for their children.

Chapter 120 has decided to ask you – our members – to lend a helping hand to your fellow veterans and their families. Even a small amount of \$5 can make a difference – or more if you can afford to help a fellow veteran and his or her family.

Please send your generous gift, made out to Connecticut Chapter 120, to:

Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.
Connecticut Chapter 120
Attention: Helping Hands for Veterans
P.O. Box 4136
Hartford, CT 06145

And don't forget, your donations are tax deductible.

Hartford Vet Center



25 Elm Street, Suite A
Rocky Hill, CT 06067

Phone: (860)-563-8800
Fax: (860)-563-8805



Welcome Home



**Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.
Greater Hartford Chapter 120
P.O. Box 4136
Hartford, CT 06145**