

# BENEFITS & BEYOND

Veterans & Social Security Disability

JAN DILS  
ATTORNEYS AT LAW, L.C.

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## The VA Studies Long-Term Effects of COVID-19 While Partially Reopening

**T**he U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) began a national four-year study of the impact of COVID-19 on Veterans to help address critical questions about the disease.

Known as EPIC3 (Epidemiology, Immunology and Clinical Characteristics of COVID-19), researchers will study data and biospecimens, such as throat swabs and blood, to learn how the virus that causes COVID-19 has affected Veterans.

“By analyzing data on COVID-19 risk factors, progression, outcomes and immunity, this VA research promises to significantly advance the fight against the disease,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “The study will complement a similar effort by the Department of Defense (DOD).”

The study involves Veterans infected with COVID-19 and those who have recovered or who may be at risk but have not been infected by the virus. They are volunteers who are inpatients, outpatients and residents in the VA’s Community Living Centers. Each cohort consists of hundreds of Veterans.

A similar study is being conducted by the Department of Defense (DOD) involving active-duty service members. At the end of their respective studies, the VA and DOD researchers plan to compare findings from the two study groups. To learn more about VA research, visit [research.va.gov](https://research.va.gov).

### **C&P Exams Resume at Select VA Locations**

The VA uses the Compensation and Pension (C&P) exam to help rate your disability. Your rating will be based on how severe your disability is – and will affect how much disability compensation you’ll receive. Compensation may include things like monthly payments and enrollment in the VA healthcare program. Note that if you have enough medical evidence in your file to support your claim, the VA won’t ask you to have a claim exam. Medical evidence may include doctor and hospital reports, test results and other documents.

In late May, the VA announced it will begin conducting C&P exams at select locations across the country, including Huntington, West Virginia (approximately two hours south of Parkersburg).

“Resuming C&P exams allows VA to continue delivering the benefits our Veterans have earned,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “We’re keeping the safety of Veterans and our medical providers as our highest priority and have put a robust set of measures in place to ensure medical providers can safely conduct these examinations.”

Safety measures include COVID-19 screening for Veterans and employees, physical distancing and appropriate personal protective equipment to include face coverings and gloves. VA is working closely with its medic



## Letter From Jan

Of our 25-plus years of advocating for Veterans and Social Security disability benefits for the community, there has never been a time like this. Here at the firm, we continue to put our work family and clients first. I am proud of my team and their ability to remain strong and do what they do best – helping people.

The coronavirus has been financially devastating for so many. But many of our Veterans and Social Security disability clients were barely making ends meet before the onset of COVID-19. With this, we want each and every one of you to know that we are still here to help you navigate the system. We hope to be a comfort as you face so many challenges. We know it's crucial for you to still get the benefits you

deserve. Whether you're a Veteran trying to get your C&P exam (or determining if it's necessary) or someone suffering from debilitating back pain, we have experience in dealing with the appropriate government agency. Please, now more than ever, don't hesitate to contact us at [fight4vets.com](http://fight4vets.com) or [jandils.com](http://jandils.com). Take care of yourself and your family. We'll guide you through the legal details.

Sincerely,

**JAN DILS** brings her expertise to issues that affect you and millions of other Americans every day. While her knowledge spans the critical areas pertaining to Personal Injury, Veterans benefits, Social Security disability benefits and related appeals and claims, her practice remains focused on people, making sure you get the right answers and, above all, results.

## OFFICE INBOX

This past May, eight employees celebrated work anniversaries: SS Attorney **Gowan Moise** celebrated six years. VA Leads & Intake Specialist **Beth Frederick** and Software Developer **Nikki Peace** celebrated four years. **Jeff Hines** and **Stephanie Copen** each celebrated three years. Medical Records Clerk **Lisa Parsons** celebrated two years, while **Garrett Hofmann** and **Lisa Hupp** each celebrated their one-year anniversaries. We also celebrated 12 birthdays in the month of May: **Lisa Hupp**, **Eric Foy**, **Julie Pease**, **Billie Garrett**, **Kerri Nichols**, **Asia Coon**, **Brooke Watkins**, **Greg Watkins**, **Jessica Justice**, **Jeff Hines**, **Sara Welling** and **Natasha McFarland**. Lastly, we welcomed four new additions to the firm: VA Attorney **Paul I. Timpone**, SS Attorney **Charley Gates**, SS Workup Specialist **Skylar Sinnet**, and Intern **Reagan Shriver**.

## COMMUNITY CORNER

The pandemic brought many changes and adjustments to our lives over the past few months. In an attempt to shake it up and have a little fun, during the week of May 11-15 we decided to go ahead with our annual **Spirit Week** – social distancing style. Unlike our usual spirit week, we weren't in the office, so we had to get extra creative with the daily themes.

We kicked it off with Favorite T-Shirt Monday. The staff wore their most memorable or favorite T-shirts to our daily video conference huddles. Tuesday

was Quarantine Hobby where we submitted photos of all the projects and hobbies we've developed during our extended time at home. Wednesday was a Scavenger Hunt, a full day of various tasks we could easily achieve at home with our families. Following that was Vaca Thursday. Because many of us had to cancel trips, we showcased how we can still make time for a little vacation at home. Finally, we ended the week with Family-Fun Friday. Team members shared photos and silly videos of their families having fun during quarantine.

The week brought lots of fun and laughter to the team, a much-needed refresher. We shared many of the photos from the week on our Facebook page. Visit the Jan Dils, Attorneys at Law, Facebook page, [facebook.com/jandilsattorneysatlaw](https://facebook.com/jandilsattorneysatlaw) to get a glimpse of the fun.



## Employee Spotlight

### PAUL I. TIMPONE

Paul Timpone recently joined the firm as our newest Veterans Disability Attorney. He received his bachelor's degree in 2006 from Northwestern University and his JD at Albany Law School in 2011. With nearly a decade of experience in the legal field, Paul brings a passion for assisting those who have served our nation. Paul's brother is a United States Air Force Veteran.

"I know what it is like to have a family member selflessly serve our country and what so many Veterans go through as they transition back to civilian life. It gives me great pride to help our Veterans with disabilities. They should all be treated with honor and compassion and get the benefits they deserve."

Interestingly enough, Paul is fluent in French and truly enjoys legal research and writing. In his free time, he enjoys riding motorcycles, traveling, CrossFit® and spending time with his two-year-old son. As you can see, Paul is a go-getter who embodies the Jan Dils motto: "We won't take 'NO' for an answer®"



# Social Security Disability for Back Pain

**IF YOU SUFFER** from back pain and it makes you unable to work, you may be eligible for Social Security Disability benefits. The Social Security Administration's (SSA) Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) program enables individuals who have worked to earn sufficient credits and who have paid in enough taxes to the SSA to be considered eligible for benefits if specified criteria are met. In many cases, dependent children of the disabled individual are also eligible for benefits as well.

There are several conditions of the spine that can cause back pain and problems. Some of these conditions occur naturally with age, but others may happen prematurely or be the result of an accident or another condition.

Some examples of back problems include:

- Degenerative disc disorder
- Arachnoiditis
- Spondylitis
- Osteoarthritis
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Herniated discs
- Nerve root compression
- Scoliosis
- Spinal stenosis
- Spondylolisthesis



While back pain can be very debilitating and cause agony to the individual who suffers from it, the SSA makes it a challenge to get benefits for those suffering. In order to qualify for SSDI benefits, you have to be diagnosed with a medical condition that lasts for at least a year. Your examinations, including X-rays, MRIs, or your physician's notes regarding an examination, indicate you suffer from an abnormality of the spine or spinal canal and that is what causes your pain and discomfort.

## The SSA Evaluation and Medical Qualifications

The SSA uses their own medical guide known as the Blue Book to determine whether or not an individual meets the criteria to be considered disabled and eligible for SSDI. There is no listing for back pain, but there are listings that apply to specific conditions that cause the pain. As an example, degenerative disc disease does not have a specific listing.

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## What's Cooking?

### Tropical Fruit Salad



So many of us may not be vacationing this summer, but why let that stop you from putting yourself and your family in a tropical mood? Enjoy this easy, but delightful, recipe from Leads & Intake Specialist **Cindy Carper**.

#### INGREDIENTS

1 bag colored mini marshmallows

1 cup coconut flakes

1 can drained crushed pineapple

1 large can drained mandarin oranges

1 cup sour cream

1 cup chopped walnuts, if desired

**DIRECTIONS:** Toss, chill and serve!



## IT'S GAME TIME

### COMMONYMS

#### What's a commonym you ask?

A commonym is a group of words that have a common trait in the three words/items listed. For example: the words; A car - A tree - An elephant... they all have trunks. These will make you think!

1. The Brain - The Lung - The Ear
2. Spider - Fiddler - Hermit
3. Back - Butterfly - Side
4. A Car - A Tree - An Elephant
5. A Bear - A Hammer - A Lobster
6. Finish - Fishing - Dotted
7. Metal - Radar - Lie
8. Stop - Spot - Strobe
9. Trap - French - Glass
10. State - Sales - Income

**Answers:** 1 They have lobes 2 Crabs 3 Swimming strokes 4 They have trunks 5 They have claws 6 Lines 7 Detectors 8 Lights 9 Doors 10 Taxes



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**PERSONAL INJURY / VETERANS DISABILITY / SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY**

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**Continues from inside story >>**

You have to have severe symptoms such as requiring assistance to walk, needing to adjust your position more than every two hours, and suffer from nerve-specific problems. Many back pain problems can be classified under Section 1.04, which deals with spine disorders. If you can prove that your particular back pain meets the equivalent for spinal disorders, you would meet the requirements set forth in the medical guide.

**Regardless of the cause of your back pain, you have to provide evidence of how it impacts your ability to work and causes your daily limitations.**

Regardless of the cause of your back pain, you have to provide evidence of how it impacts your ability to work and causes your daily limitations. Your documents need to include notes from your physician about limitations you have when walking or standing, and if you have to have a cane, walker or crutches in order to be mobile. These are all considered with great weight when making a disability determination decision.

**Applying Specific Medical Tests to Your Case for Disability**

Several medical tests, including X-rays, MRI and CAT scans, and other tests and

examinations can be used as ways to confirm that you are suffering from a disorder that is causing severe back pain and difficulty with your mobility. The SSA may order an additional medical evaluation at their expense to confirm your condition and the severity of your symptoms. The SSDI application process can be lengthy and may involve denials and appeals.

At Jan Dils, Attorneys at Law, we have more than 25 years of experience working with the SSA. We can tell you if you have a credible case and help you present it. Patients suffering from musculoskeletal conditions incur medical costs of about \$240 billion per year in the United States. Medical bills and the inability to work can be financially devastating. Don't go it alone. Contact us at **877.526.3457** or **jandils.com**. Your first consultation is always free.

