

## Veteran's Disability Appeal Claim Pays Off

**Grieser awarded \$44,263 and \$1,932 a month for life after previous claims were denied**

Persistence pays off is more than a saying for 751-retiree Charlie Grieser; it is also a message he wants to send to other veterans who might find themselves in the situation he was in.

In October, Grieser was finally awarded a 90 percent disability that delivered him more than \$44,263 in retroactive disability payments, after years of being denied a disability claim with the Veterans Administration (VA) arising from his years in the Marine Corps. In addition, he will receive \$1,932 a month disability payment tax free for the rest of his life, free medical care, and free access to Washington State parks.

However, the disability claim might never have been awarded without assistance and encouragement from Union Steward Charles McGrew, who also serves as a Veteran Service Officer (VSO). As a VSO, McGrew is trained in the claims process. He advised Grieser to refile the claim, walked him through the process, helped gather medical records, service records and other evidence to substantiate his disability claims.

Grieser was discouraged after having his claim denied multiple times (in 1974, 2010, and 2014). In 2016, as Grieser was preparing to retire from Boeing, he spoke with McGrew about his frustration at being repeatedly denied a claim with the VA.

"While it was a tedious and time-consuming process, it was definitely worth pursuing. Even though several of my claims were still denied, others were approved, giving me some compensation for the disabilities I have lived with for decades," said Grieser.

Grieser attended the October Local F meeting to thank McGrew and share his story with other veterans who might have experienced the same claim denial.

"Never give up if you believe your health conditions, including mental health, are due to your time in the



*Union Steward Charles McGrew (l), who is also a Veteran Service Officer (VSO), helped retiree Charlie Grieser refile his veteran disability appeal that had been denied three times. With McGrew's help, Grieser received \$44,263 in retroactive disability payment and will receive \$1,932 monthly for life.*

military, but don't go it alone. Contact a VSO and get assistance in filing a new claim or appeal. I don't want others to go through the years of frustration I endured after being repeatedly denied," said Grieser.

"Boeing actively recruits employees from the military because of their work ethic, discipline and skill set. But veterans often bring baggage that isn't easy to identify. If my arm was broken, Boeing would send me to medical, but if my mind is injured, they currently don't have the resources to deal with it. The onsite medical clinic and HR are clueless on this so veterans don't know who to talk to if they have issues and often suffer in silence."

Our union is looking to put together training for our Union Stewards, which could also be available to managers as well, much like joint safety training is provided. This would cover learning how to recognize PTSD and other issues that often affect our veterans. The more trained

individuals there are to help veterans, the better off we will all be.

McGrew is encouraged by the conversations around helping veterans. He approached District 751 President Jon Holden about getting a Veterans Committee established within 751 and continues to give input. He hopes that others will get VSO training to help veterans in our membership ranks and in the community.

In 2010, McGrew helped establish a local National Association for Black Veterans, Chapter 50. He serves as commander for the group working out of donated office space on the base, but highlights the group is for all veterans. Their group has 22 members and only 3 are black.

"Our organization goes out on the streets to find veterans who might not ask for help, but could be living on the streets," said McGrew. "This is all about finding ways to help veterans in our membership and in our community. I strongly encourage all veterans to get involved with our Union's committee or any group that helps our veterans."

McGrew was pleased that Grieser's appeal was approved. He noted that information for a disability claim can come from a variety of sources, including your kids, spouse, friends or your boss. If you can't find official records, build a history using statements from others of what they have witnessed.

"When you go to a doctor and they ask when did this symptom start, often it goes back to someone's military service. It can be something that never went away, but vets learned to live with," McGrew added. "As a VSO, I have helped many veterans support and file their claim, gather supporting information, track their claim and file appeals. VSO's can help you avoid delays that missing paperwork can cause."

VSO's offer their services free of charge and have been specially trained. The National Veterans Foundation has a website with helpful information about how to locate a VSO in your area. The link is: <https://nvf.org/veteran-service-officers> or they can be reached by phone at: 888-777-4443.