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## TIME FOR AN INSURANCE TUNE-UP?

ZIFF LAW'S JIM REED ADVISES DRIVERS TO CHECK POLICIES TO BE SURE THEY HAVE ENOUGH COVERAGE

Spring is here, and summer travel season will be right behind it, so now is a good time to review your car insurance policy.

As you dig out your policy, ask yourself two questions:

1. Do I have enough insurance to protect me and my family if we have an accident that's my fault?
2. How can I better protect myself if I have an accident caused by another driver who has no or inadequate insurance? (You could end up paying for your own recovery, and your medical bills could be staggering.)

If you're like most drivers, you accept the minimum levels of coverage to keep your costs down. But those low levels can get you in trouble if you have an accident, regardless of whether it was your fault.

Jim Reed, managing partner of the Ziff Law Firm, suggests you review five points on your policy:

### Do you have at least \$250,000 of Liability Coverage?

Liability Coverage is insurance to protect you if you have the misfortune of hurting someone else. New York law only requires you to have \$25,000 in coverage but that amount is inadequate to protect you, so Jim recommends you have at least \$250,000 in coverage. The good news is that the cost of increasing your liability limits to \$250,000 is not significantly more than you pay for the minimum coverage of \$25,000 because the first layer of protection is the most expensive and adding additional layers of protection are significantly cheaper even though you are getting dramatically more coverage.

### Do you have at least \$250,000 of SUM Coverage?

Supplemental Under-Insured Motorists (SUM) Coverage is coverage to protect YOU and your family in the event that you have the misfortune to be injured by another driver with inadequate insurance coverage. You can have SUM limits equal to your Liability limits so it is important to always make sure your SUM limits equal your Liability limits or you will be passing up very important coverage.

### Do you have at least \$50,000 of APIP/OBEL Coverage?

New York law requires every car owner to carry \$50,000

of No-Fault (NF) coverage, which is coverage that pays your medical bills and lost wages if you are hurt while driving or riding as a passenger. These days, \$50,000 doesn't go very far in covering monstrous medical expenses, so you may buy extra coverage called Additional Personal Injury Protection (APIP) and Optional Basic Economic Loss (OBEL) coverage. I recommend \$100,000 of APIP/OBEL as again, this is coverage to protect you, so it is money well-spent.

### If married, do you have Spousal Coverage?

In New York, although it makes no sense, your insurance policy does not necessarily provide protection for your spouse if you have the misfortune of causing an accident injuring your spouse. However, you can request that your auto insurance policy include Spousal Coverage and Jim highly recommends you do so.

### If you have kids living with you who regularly drive your car, are they listed as Drivers on your policy?

Generally, any person you permit to drive your car is covered by your policy but insurance carriers have been known to deny coverage if you do not list your driving-age children who reside full-time with you on your policy as Additional Drivers. Better safe than sorry.

Before you call your insurance agent, read Jim's free 34-page book, "Learn the Five Secrets to Buying Auto Insurance." It's available at [www.zifflaw.com/books/insurance](http://www.zifflaw.com/books/insurance).

Jim wrote the book to level the playing field between you and your insurance company. He's been helping folks whose lives have been changed by careless drivers for more than 20 years, and many people come to him for help because the New York State insurance laws are very confusing.

"Insurance companies like to keep their customers in the dark," Jim said. "They do a terrible job of educating consumers and they are far more interested in profits than helping their customers."

As an injury attorney, Jim's job is to help those who are seriously injured recover their lost wages and pay their medical bills, and make sure they receive fair compensation for their pain and disability. His tips and his free book make car insurance in New York understandable, so order your free copy of his book today.

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FREE INSURANCE  
CHECKUP

If you want Attorney Jim Reed to review your policy at no charge, please call Jim at 607-733-8866 or email Jim at [jreed@zifflaw.com](mailto:jreed@zifflaw.com) and he will tell you what he needs to evaluate your insurance. Again, it's a free service of the Ziff Law Firm.

# REED GEARS UP TO FIGHT FOR BIKE SAFETY

ZIFF LAW MANAGING PARTNER SETS BIG GOALS FOR BICYCLING ADVOCACY GROUP



Attorney Jim Reed, managing partner of the Ziff Law Firm, has an aggressive agenda as the new President of the New York Bicycling Coalition (NYBC, [nybc.net](http://nybc.net)), a statewide group that advocates for a safer New York for all bicyclists.

“The New York Bicycling Coalition is dedicated to making bicycling safer for all New Yorkers,” said Jim, who has handled hundreds of bicycle accident cases in his 29 years as a lawyer. “As a personal injury lawyer representing cyclists from all over the state, I know all too well the dangers faced by cyclists.”

“It is my personal goal to see fewer fatalities and injuries, and I hope to achieve that goal while working hard on behalf of NYBC.”

The New York Bicycling Coalition advocates in Albany and across the state for better transportation policies, more funding, and more education about bicycle safety, the benefits of riding, and treating riders with respect.

Jim, who was elected Board President last fall after four years on the Board, has a long to-do list he plans to tackle: pass statewide bicycle safety laws, boost bicycle tourism, and most importantly, fight for a 3-foot passing law so motorists give bicyclists a safer space. “I will make this my top priority in Albany this year,” Jim said.

Jim has been an avid cyclist since he was a teenager. He participates in all kind of cycling, including road racing, mountain biking, bike trips and recreational riding. NYBC welcomes Jim’s energy and passion for safety as its leader.

“Jim is the right person to lead NYBC as we begin our second quarter-century as the only statewide organization working on the full spectrum of bike and pedestrian issues,” said NYBC Executive Director Paul Winkeller. “His successful work as a bike lawyer has encompassed advocacy, education and enforcement – all the elements that need to be aligned in order to ensure a safe and shared road and trail system serving every New Yorker.”

“Jim’s immense passion for cycling and his deep understanding of the transformative value of healthy transportation and recreation will serve NYBC well as we continue to grow our impact throughout the state,” said Justin Smith, NYBC communications director. “Jim’s proven leadership in his community and at his practice combined with his extensive legal experience representing people who bike, as well as his desire to enable everyone to pedal to better, fuller lives, will ensure that NYBC’s governance remains strong as we advance our efforts helping communities in New York state become safer and more enjoyable places to ride a bicycle.”

**QUESTION:** What are some of the goals you hope to address while NYBC President?



*Jim Reed, new president of NYBC: “As a personal injury lawyer representing cyclists from all over the state, I know all too well the dangers faced by cyclists.”*

**JIM:** I have many goals for NYBC: passing important bicycling safety laws, creating the first statewide summit for cycling advocates in 2017, creating more opportunity for bicycle tourism in New York, and working to assist local advocacy groups in their efforts to bring better and safer cycling infrastructure to their communities.

**Q:** What will be on your agenda when you meet with state lawmakers in Albany?

**JIM:** My No. 1 legislative agenda item is passing a 3-foot safe passing law in New York to replace our ineffective current law, which only says that a car must pass at a “safe” distance but doesn’t give any guidance on what is a “safe” distance. Unfortunately, with such an ambiguous standard, many police and prosecutors take the position that any distance, even 6 inches, must have been “safe” if the car didn’t actually hit the cyclist, which is clearly ridiculous and very unsafe. We need a definite rule that advises both motorists and cyclists that a minimum safe passing distance is 3 feet.

Now I need New Yorkers to join the fight. First, I am urging all residents to send an email to your state legislators, asking them to co-sponsor or support the 3-foot passing law. Go to [NYBC.NET](http://NYBC.NET) to join the fight.



*(Continued on Page 5)*

# STATE JUDICIAL PANEL INSPIRES SONSIRE

## FOR ZIFF LAW ATTORNEY, HELPING CUOMO SELECT TOP STATE JUDGES IS GREAT TRAINING



Christina Sonsire welcomes any opportunity to grow as an attorney.

So on two recent occasions, our Ziff Law rising star jumped at the chance to participate again in a panel of trial lawyers who advised Gov. Andrew Cuomo on his selection of both a new chief judge for the New York State Court of Appeals, the top court in the state, and an associate judge to the same court. It was the second year in a row Christina was on the panel of about 14 lawyers advising the governor about candidates for the seven-member court.

“Serving on this type of committee is an excellent opportunity to help strengthen New York’s top court as well as gain insight from some of the state’s top lawyers,” Christina said. “I am very thankful for the chance to participate and represent our area.”

Christina, a member of the board of directors of the New York State Academy of Trial Lawyers, joined 13 other lawyers from the academy in interviewing the seven finalists on Nov. 6 and Jan. 4.

The candidates were all impressive, Christina said. “They were not afraid to follow their dreams and they did not take the easy way in their careers; they took calculated risks.”

The experience also gave Christina the chance to interact with some of New York’s top judges outside of the courtroom. “Many of the candidates were sitting appellate level judges, some of whom I have appeared in front of and others whose decisions I have read and analyzed. It was exceedingly interesting and educational to turn the tables on them by being the one asking the questions. Having the chance to gain insights into the judges’ legal philosophies will certainly help me in the future.”

In December, Cuomo selected Janet DiFiore, a former Westchester County district attorney, to serve as Chief Judge. She replaced Jonathan Lippman, who retired in December. In January, he selected Michael Garcia, a former United States attorney for the Southern District of New York under President George W. Bush, to replace Judge Susan Phillips Read, who stepped down in August.

“I found each of Governor Cuomo’s selections a bit surprising, though they were both strong candidates,” Christina said. “However, in the end, these selections are part of a much bigger political landscape. Janet DiFiore is a Democrat from Westchester who has had a longstanding professional relationship with Governor Cuomo, who is also from Westchester. Michael Garcia, on the other hand, is a fairly conservative Republican, and all of the other Court of Appeals selections Governor Cuomo has made have been Democrats. It would be naïve to think these types of things don’t factor into the way decisions are made.”

Cuomo asked the academy and other state bar associations to screen the candidates and make a recommendation, said Christina, who was appointed to the panel by Academy Executive Director Michelle J. Stern.

For the second year in a row, Christina was the only trial lawyer on the panel chosen to represent the Elmira, Corning, Ithaca and Binghamton region. It was the first time the academy had an opportunity to advise the governor on the selection of a chief judge.

Christina was selected because of her strong record as a plaintiffs’ attorney, primarily in medical malpractice cases. She has also lectured extensively across the state.

DiFiore, 60, will serve 10 years as chief judge because all Court of Appeals judges must retire at the end of the year they turn 70. She is the second female chief judge. The late Judith Kaye served from 1993 to 2008.

Some of the candidates were working mothers, which inspired Christina, the mother of two young daughters. “That reminded me that mothers can do anything we set our mind to, and we can inspire our own children to reach for the stars in the process.”

But more than anything else, being on the panel reminded Christina how fortunate she is to practice in New York State.

“Our state arguably has the richest jurisprudential history in the country, and the Court of Appeals is one of the most important courts in the world,” she said. “The experience helped me keep in mind that I am a small part of something much bigger, and it’s my duty to help preserve and improve our court system for generations to come.”



### LESSONS FROM ALBANY

Christina Sonsire said she has learned a lot about her profession in the last two years while serving on the state judicial panel. Among the lessons:

- **LAW CAREERS ARE FLUID.** There are ups and downs, but as long as you stay focused on improving yourself and working for the higher good, opportunities will present themselves. Many of the candidates encountered rough patches, but they never gave up.
- **WHATEVER YOU CHOOSE TO DO, TRY YOUR BEST TO MASTER IT.** None of the candidates had experience in all aspects of the law. That is impossible. But they were all masters of some parts. That is the key.
- **KEEP TRYING.** Many candidates have appeared numerous times. They shared that rejection is tough – like it is for anyone who truly desires something. Yet they keep putting themselves out there.
- **WE HAVE MANY TREMENDOUS ROLE MODELS IN OUR STATE.** The candidates were not politicians, and that was really refreshing! They are hard-working people who want to preserve and protect the rule of law.

# LOCAL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT: BARBIE THE WELDER

ERIN'S BARBIE PARSONS HAS FANS ALL OVER THE WORLD AS SHE TURNS SCRAP METAL INTO ART WITH A TORCH



*The Pirate Ship Fire Pit was a custom order. It is 7 feet tall, 7 feet long, and 34 inches wide.*



*A scorpion made from odds and ends found in Barbie's shop.*



*Barbie has made many tables of all shapes and sizes and styles.*



*Barbie Parsons – Barbie The Welder – has used social media to attract customers from all over the world.*

Barbie Parsons is an uncommon but accomplished Twin Tiers artist who is building a following worldwide thanks to social media. Better known as Barbie the Welder, she transforms scrap metal into art, often using just a welding torch and her imagination.

A scene in the 2000 movie “Cast Away,” starring Tom Hanks, opened her eyes to the potential of welding as a business and art form.

“In the beginning of the movie, there was a female character who was welding a giant sculpture of angel wings,” said Barbie, who lives in Erin with her 11-year-old son, Jordan Parsons. “When I saw her doing that, it changed my life. I knew it was something I had to do.”

She studied welding at Greater Southern Tier BOCES in Horseheads, and then worked for five years as a welder at Cameron Manufacturing and Design, a large Horseheads machine shop that specializes in custom fabrication for manufacturers, before chasing her dream.

She opened her business, BarbieTheWelder, in her garage as a part-time gig in 2012 to test the waters. The business took off right away, and by September 2014, she left Cameron (“a great place to work,” she said) to become a full-time entrepreneur and artist.

Are you looking for a unique piece of furniture, or perhaps an original sculpture? She makes everything from furniture to home décor such as bookends and many other things. If you think your furniture or home décor idea is impossible, Barbie will find a way.

She loves creating custom pieces. “It’s always fun and a great challenge to see a custom order come together,” she said. “People are surprised at what I can do with a welding torch.”

Barbie is a great example of an unsung business hero in the Twin Tiers. Check out her work at [WWW.BARBIETHEWELDER.COM](http://WWW.BARBIETHEWELDER.COM), or find her on Instagram or Etsy (search for barbiethewelder) or Facebook (Barbiethewelder). Check her website for local shops that carry some of her pieces.

Barbie took a break recently to tell us about her very successful new business.

**QUESTION: HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE YOUR BUSINESS TO PEOPLE?**

**ANSWER:** I handcraft custom metal furniture, home décor and metal sculptures using new and repurposed materials.

**Q: DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A WELDING ARTIST?**

**A:** I was creative as a child. I made drawings but what I do now is beyond anything I ever dreamed of. Last year was amazing as far as opportunities and experiences. The business just kept growing. I don’t think of myself as an artist really, but some of my work has now been displayed and sold in area art galleries. I have pieces in the 60 East Gallery in Corning and the Franklin Street Gallery and Gift Shop in Watkins Glen. I have also had pieces in the Arts Council of the Southern Finger Lakes and 171 Cedar Arts Center, both in Corning. I guess I am working toward the title welding artist.

**Q: IS JORDAN LEARNING TO WELD, TOO?**

**A:** He has learned a lot. He started when he was 5 years old, attacking small projects with me. During Easter vacation in 2014, he designed and created a tool table.

He did all the measurements, laid out all the tools, and did the welding and the cleanup. That table is now for sale in The Glass Menagerie on Market Street in Corning.

He recently made a hammerhead shark out of bolts and washers and has made many other great pieces that have sold at art shows. Working with Jordan has been the biggest benefit of owning my own business. He goes with me to vendor events and is learning to sell his work. The education he is getting by working with me is invaluable

**Q: WHAT ARE YOU HEARING FROM PEOPLE AT THE VENDOR EVENTS YOU TRAVEL TO ALL OVER THE NORTHEAST?**

**A:** I learned that I need to get my products out in front of people so they can learn about who I am and see what I can do. That's where the money is. The feedback has been incredible. A lot of people say my work is unique and it is the first time they have ever seen anything like it.

The travel is difficult, but I know I am on the right path. Fortunately, I have a phenomenal group of people behind me that believe in me and are very encouraging. That has been a huge factor in my success so far. I recently added a sponsor, Praxair, a welding supply company in Elmira, which provided me with welding curtains, which I can use

to weld safely at shows that allow it. I hope to make small custom items for customers right there during the shows.

**Q: HOW HAVE SALES BEEN ONLINE?**

**A:** I have had many custom orders through Instagram and Etsy. I sent a custom piece out to a person in Virginia in the fall. I sent a 2-foot-tall 3D sign to a man in Auburn. I have sold items on Etsy to people on four different continents. I created a 3-foot-tall elk silhouette to hang over a customer's driveway. I custom-made a 52-inch mahi-mahi sculpture for a woman in Maryland. And I created a 7-foot-long, 7-foot-tall pirate ship fire pit for a customer in Michigan. Social media has been a great success for me.

**Q: HOW DO YOU LIKE BEING A BUSINESS OWNER?**

**A:** Once I started welding, I could not stop. I look forward to it every day. I love finding rusty old pieces that people have thrown out and turning them into something that people appreciate. My biggest goals are to be creative and work at my own schedule. I can spend more time with my son now. I am making money based on my work, not an hourly wage. If I want to earn more money, then I get creative and find more ways to create and sell my pieces. The potential for earnings is unlimited as long as I am able to do the work.

## REED GEARS UP TO FIGHT FOR BIKE SAFETY

ZIFF LAW MANAGING PARTNER SETS BIG GOALS FOR BICYCLING ADVOCACY GROUP

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IN ADDITION, please schedule a visit with your legislator to ask them face-to-face to support this amendment – because it is the most effective way to really get a senator or assemblyman to support the proposed law.

I particularly want to thank our local state Senator Tom O'Mara for his leadership in agreeing to sponsor the 3-foot passing distance amendment. Sen. O'Mara is dedicated to improving cycling safety for all New Yorkers and bicyclists from across the state thank him for his help in supporting this important law.

**Q: In an interview with Mike Dayton at the Bike Law Blog ([www.bikelaw.com](http://www.bikelaw.com)), you mentioned starting a special bike ride through the Finger Lakes?**

**JIM:** NYBC co-sponsors a 500-mile ride across Upstate, the Great Big FANY Ride. It passes through the Finger Lakes, but I want a weeklong Finger Lakes Ride, too.



**Q: What can be done to make Twin Tiers streets and roads safer for bicyclists?**

**JIM:** There are a number of things that folks can do: when you see a bicyclist, slow down and give them space; be on the lookout for cyclists at ALL times — during the day, at night, downtown and out in the countryside, as there are more and more bikes on the road. As a bicyclist, ride respectfully and predictably.

**Q: How can Twin Tiers bicyclists get more involved with advocating for bicyclists?**

**JIM:** If you care about cycling safety — for you, your kids, your grandkids — please consider joining NYBC. Memberships start at just \$35 and I can assure you every penny of that membership goes to support safer cycling in New York. To learn more about NYBC and its mission and memberships, go to [NYBC.NET](http://NYBC.NET).

# NEW HOPE FOR YOUR MEDICAL RECORDS?

THE WHITE HOUSE WANTS DOCTORS AND HOSPITALS TO SEND THEM WITHIN 30 DAYS OF REQUESTS



If you are one of the thousands of Twin Tiers residents who have struggled to get a copy of your medical records from your doctor or hospital, there could be good news from the federal government.

Maybe.

The Obama administration is trying to knock down some of the obstacles Americans face when requesting their own

medical records, which would be a big boost in prosecuting medical malpractice cases.

The federal government has told doctors and hospitals that in most cases they must provide copies of these records within 30 days of receiving a request. Patients have been able to obtain copies of their records for a long time, but millions of people have complained to federal officials that they were thwarted in trying to exercise that right.

In new guidelines out this winter, patients will not be required to state a reason for requesting their records, and doctors and hospitals cannot deny access out of concern that patients might be upset by the information.

“Based on recent studies and our own enforcement experience, far too often individuals face obstacles to accessing their health information,” said Jocelyn Samuels, the director of the Office for Civil Rights at the Department of Health and Human Services, which enforces federal health privacy standards, in *The New York Times*. “This must change.”

According to *The Times*, under the new guidelines, a health care provider cannot require patients to pick up their records in person if they ask that the records be sent by mail or email. A health care provider cannot deny a request for access to health information because a patient has failed to pay medical bills. A doctor or a hospital may charge a fee to cover the cost of copying, but cannot charge for the cost of searching for data and retrieving it.

The rules were issued under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996. Doctors and hospitals are supposed to provide consumers with access to personal health information within 30 days, and in some cases, can extend the deadline by 30 days. But most requests should be fulfilled in fewer than 30 days, the government said.

Unfortunately, two Ziff Law Firm attorneys who primarily handle medical malpractice and catastrophic injury cases say they see the obstacles faced by their clients far too often.

“Many times, people attempt to get their medical records before calling a lawyer. Although this should be a good way to see what the records say quickly, they are often faced with delays of weeks – or even months – before their requests are honored,” Christina Sonsire said. “Hopefully, these new guidelines will help, though time will only tell whether they can begin to remedy what appears to be a deep and systemic problem.”

In the electronic age we live in, it is inexcusable for it to take months for a medical provider to give a patient access to his or her own records, said Ziff Law’s Adam Gee.

“While this proposed action will hopefully alleviate those long wait times, it doesn’t do enough to make the records accessible,” he said. “Perhaps an even bigger problem than the time it takes to get the records is the cost of those records. In New York State, medical providers are entitled to charge up to 75 cents per page. Most facilities today store their records electronically, so it takes no more effort or cost to find and burn one page of records to a disc than it does for 1,000 pages.”

To read more about your rights, go here:

[WWW.HHS.GOV/HIPAA/FOR-PROFESSIONALS/PRIVACY/GUIDANCE/ACCESS/INDEX.HTML](http://WWW.HHS.GOV/HIPAA/FOR-PROFESSIONALS/PRIVACY/GUIDANCE/ACCESS/INDEX.HTML)



*Adam Gee: “While this proposed action will hopefully alleviate those long wait times, it doesn’t do enough to make the records accessible.”*

## A SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT CHANGES

Some of the ways in which the new federal guidance should make it easier to receive your records include:

- Doctors and hospitals are not allowed to ask you why you want your records. If you happen to volunteer your reason for requesting your records, they cannot deny you access to your records based on your reason for wanting them.
- Your doctor or hospital cannot require you to go to the office of facility in person if you request that they mail your records to you.
- Nor can they require you to use a web portal to request access to your records, because there are still people who do not have Internet access.
- They must provide your records within 30 days. That’s calendar days, not business days. Under certain circumstances, that time limit can be extended by up to 30 days, but you must be notified of the extension within the first 30-day time period.
- You can be charged a fee for the cost of making paper or electronic copies and postage, but not fees for searching for your records, storage, or retrieval. This applies even if your state laws allow the extra charges.

# FORMER MARINE WARNS OF CAMP LEJEUNE DANGERS

ZIFF LAW'S JACK SCHAMEL WANTS VETERANS TO KNOW ABOUT CONTAMINATED WATER AT BASE



*Jack Schamel, a Marine Corps veteran, is a licensed workers' compensation representative for the Ziff Law Firm.*



Last April, the Ziff Law Firm published a blog post on its website that let our many friends in the military veteran community know about a serious health risk linked to a Marine Corps base in North Carolina, and the health benefits they may be entitled to as a result.

Last year, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced that Marines Corps veterans and their families who lived in or worked at the Camp Lejeune Marine Corps base from the 1950s through the 1980s may have serious health conditions because they were exposed to contaminated water.

The VA said the water had industrial solvents, benzene and other chemicals. As a result, the VA is starting to pay for medical benefits to help the veterans and their families. Veterans and family members who served in active duty or resided at Camp Lejeune for 30 days or more between Aug. 1, 1953, and Dec. 31, 1987, might be eligible for VA health benefits for 15 medical conditions.



*Jack Schamel was a Marine in the 1950s who was stationed for a time at Camp Lejeune.*

This terrible story hit close to home for the Ziff Law Firm family because Jack Schamel, our longtime licensed workers' compensation representative, is one of the Marine Corps veterans exposed at Camp Lejeune. Jack, who retired as a sergeant in 1958 after four years in the corps, was at Camp Lejeune in 1954 and 1958. He brought this to our attention and wanted to get the word out to Twin Tiers veterans.

Jack is battling a form of blood cancer called multiple myeloma. The VA is paying for the medication he takes, and is also paying for doctor co-pays for the past.

Recently, the VA announced it would help up to 15,000 seriously ill veterans by offering fast-track compensation for VA disability awards for veterans with eight medical conditions – including Jack's

illness, multiple myeloma – because the VA is presuming the veterans are sick as a result of their exposure to the carcinogens and other harmful chemicals.

The other proposed "presumptive" diseases are kidney cancer, liver cancer, non-Hodgkin lymphoma, leukemia, scleroderma, Parkinson's disease, and aplastic anemia/myelodysplastic syndromes.

Calling these illnesses presumptive makes compensation almost automatic. Diagnosed veterans like Jack must still file claims, but they only need to show they served at the camp during the 34-year span for a certain length of time, likely to be at least 30 days.

**BUT** here is the problem for Jack and other ailing veterans: the proposed acceleration in payments cannot start until the proposed regulation is finalized, which could take up to another year or longer, according to VA officials.

Jack urges veterans to contact their local VA offices to learn more. He also urges veterans to request their records from the government by going to [WWW.ARCHIVES.GOV/VETERANS](http://WWW.ARCHIVES.GOV/VETERANS). It takes six to eight weeks to receive the records.

According to the VA, more than 20,000 veterans have filed claims since January 2011 that cite environmental hazards at the camp.

According to a story at Military.com, the VA has tracked claim outcomes for six of the eight diseases on the proposed presumptive list. Of 2,039 claims filed so far, only 311, or 15 percent, have been approved. When the proposed regulation takes effect, the approval rate for these conditions should jump toward 100 percent.

The Ziff Law Firm encourages everyone to contact their local congressional representatives and urge them to push the VA to approve the regulation NOW.

Why are we asking our veterans to wait?



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FOR BIKE SAFETY**  
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**MEET BARBIE,  
A WELDING ARTIST**  
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**FORMER MARINE  
WARNS VETERANS**  
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**ATTORNEY ADVERTISING**

The information included in this newsletter is not intended as a substitute for consultation with an attorney. Specific conditions always require consultation with appropriate legal professionals.

## ZIFF LAW AGAIN RANKED AMONG TOP LAW FIRMS IN U.S.



For the third year in a row, the Ziff Law Firm of Elmira was the only Twin Tiers law firm named to a nationally recognized directory of top law firms in the United States. Ziff Law was named a Tier 1 National Best Law Firm for 2016 in the practice areas of medical malpractice and injury law by *U.S. News - Best Lawyers*.

"This national recognition is important because a firm's reputation is critical to how seriously opposing lawyers and insurance companies take our cases," said Jim Reed, Ziff Law's managing partner. "Our strong reputation greatly assists our success in achieving the very best outcomes for our clients, many of whom say they trust us because our lawyers make Ziff Law a Best Law Firm."

Law firms were evaluated using client and peer reviews and additional information provided by the firms, according to *U.S. News - Best Lawyers*, which ranked more than 10,000 law firms in 118 practice areas.

### Our lawyers also won awards in 2015.

#### Adam Gee named to Nation's Top One Percent:

Adam was selected to become a member of the Nation's Top One Percent for 2015 by the National Association of Distinguished Counsel (NADC) in May.

Adam was selected by an independent panel of attorneys and approved by an NADC review board because of his high legal standards, said Ziff Law Managing Partner Jim Reed. "As one of the hardest-working and fearless trial lawyers I know, it came as no surprise to me that the NADC honored Adam as being

among the top 1 percent of trial lawyers in the country," Jim said.

Once candidates are nominated, NADC researchers study their background and performance and pass on their recommendations to the panel for review. The panel makes its selections for a board of former judges to review and approve.

Adam devotes his practice to representing people injured through the actions of others and medical malpractice. A motorcycle rider himself, Adam represents many bikers injured by careless drivers. Adam has been an attorney for 18 years and has been with Ziff Law since 2004.

**Jim Reed again named among Best Lawyers in U.S.:** Jim was selected in August by his peers to be featured in a national directory of top-rated attorneys for the fifth year in a row.

Jim, selected as a Best Lawyer in personal injury and medical malpractice law, was named to the *2016 Best Lawyers in America* guide following a survey of lawyers in his geographical region and area of practice. Jim was first selected for the 2012 guide.

In September 2014, Jim was named the 2015 Plaintiffs' Lawyer of the Year by the Best Lawyers in America guide among personal injury lawyers in the Southern New York Region, based on the recommendations of lawyers in Chemung, Steuben, Tompkins, Broome and Tioga, N.Y., counties.

Jim, who has been practicing law since 1986, has argued cases at every level in the New York State court system and has successfully managed many multi-million dollar cases. His practice handles serious personal injury and malpractice cases.

**Christina Sonsire named Rising Star for third year in a row:** Christina was recognized in September by a national rating service as a Super Lawyers "Rising Star" for the third year in a row for her work as a trial lawyer.

Super Lawyers, which evaluates top lawyers from more than 70 practice areas, honored Christina because she is an outstanding attorney 40 years old and younger who has been practicing law for fewer than 10 years, according to the rating service. Fewer than 2.5 percent of attorneys receive this recognition.

Super Lawyers selects attorneys using a multistep selection process that includes peer nominations, evaluations and independent research. Each candidate is evaluated on 12 indicators of peer recognition and professional achievement. Selections are made on an annual basis.

Christina is a 1994 graduate of Elmira Notre Dame High School. She has a bachelor's degree from Georgetown University and a law degree from the University of Montana. She is on the board of directors of New York state's Academy of Trial lawyers and frequently lectures across the state on topics related to injury and malpractice law.