

UNITED STATES CONGRESSMAN

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The Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act

The Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act would grant presumptive Agent Orange exposure status to US service members who served in the territorial seas of Vietnam during the Vietnam War. This would enable eligible veterans to receive expedited consideration for Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits if they suffer from any of the diseases the U.S. Government has linked to Agent Orange. This measure has received support from various veterans organizations, including the Fleet Reserve Association, Military-Veterans Advocacy, Inc., and the Blue Water Navy Association.

BACKGROUND

- ❖ During the Vietnam War, more than 20 million gallons of the herbicide “Agent Orange” were sprayed to remove jungle foliage. A toxic chemical in the herbicide has since been linked to devastating health effects, including non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma (NHL), various cancers, Type II Diabetes, and Parkinson’s disease.
- ❖ The Agent Orange Act of 1991 (AOA) empowered the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to declare certain illnesses “presumptive” to exposure to Agent Orange and enabled veterans to receive disability compensation for these related conditions.
- ❖ However, in 2002, the VA stopped giving benefits to blue water veterans and limited the scope of the AOA to only those veterans who could provide proof of “boots on the ground” in Vietnam. As a result, veterans who served in the waters off of the Vietnamese coast or in bays and harbors were required to file individual claims to restore their benefits, which have then been decided on a case-by-case basis.

KEY PROVISIONS

- ❖ Restores the presumptive coverage for those who served in the territorial seas of Vietnam that existed prior to 2002 and lifts the burden from the individual veteran to prove direct exposure to Agent Orange.
- ❖ The presumption currently exists for veterans who served on land and inland waterways, and therefore the bill places Navy personnel on the same playing field as those who served in country.
- ❖ The legislation would also reduce backlogged VA claims for veterans who are suffering from diseases the U.S. government has linked to Agent Orange, therefore reducing the overall backlog.

For more information, please contact Congressman Valadao’s Office at (202) 225-4695.

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