

## **HJ00025 RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING BLUE WATER NAVY VETERANS. Give the Vietnam Blue Water Navy Veterans their presumptive rights.**

In 1977, the first claims of Agent Orange exposure came flooding into the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). But it took 14 years for Congress to actually listen, take action and give our Vietnam veterans the benefits they deserved.

The Agent Orange Act of 1991 was implemented to provide much-needed care to veterans who were exposed to the harmful chemical cocktail Agent Orange. Many of us thought the fight to get the medical attention we deserved was over, but that wasn't the case. In 2002, the VA amended its initial plan and excluded thousands of "Blue Water" Navy vets -- who served right off the coast -- from receiving our rightful benefits. Because we hadn't served on land, the VA tried to say we were unlikely to suffer the effects of Agent Orange poisoning. Even though we didn't serve on Vietnamese soil, we were still exposed to Agent Orange. In fact, a 2011 study by the National Institute of Medicine found that Blue Water veterans could have been exposed in multiple ways, including via the ships' water distillation system and through the air. The 2009 IOM update stated "Given the available evidence, the committee recommends that members of the Blue Water Navy should not be excluded from the set of Vietnam-era veterans with presumed herbicide exposure."

We are asking for your help in urging Congress to pass legislation (House Bill H 969 and Senate Bill S 681) that will reinstate our right as Vietnam Navy veterans to receive the benefits we deserve for being exposed to this terrible chemical.

Nearly 90,000 Blue Water vets are depending on you. We are dealing with serious health issues that range from cancer to diabetes, and from Parkinson's to heart disease. Many of these diseases have made it nearly impossible for some of us to get steady work.

Last year, the VA finally extended benefits to Air Force crew members who flew in C-123s after they had been used in Vietnam to spray the toxic cocktail. The VA came to the realization that even the slightest exposure to this chemical had serious effects on a soldier's health. So why are the Navy vets' pleas being ignored? We breathed the Agent Orange-polluted air that drifted from the coast and drank water sprinkled with the herbicide, and now our bodies are paying the cost.

We ask you to stand with us, (and with Representative Chris Gibson, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, and others to demand that the VA assume responsibility for the effects of Agent Orange on Blue Water vets. Please sign our petition asking Congress to pass House Bill H 969 and Senate Bill S 681 and give us our benefits.



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