

p r o p s h o p

From: "propshop" <propshop@frontiernet.net>
Sent: Wednesday, October 14, 2015 10:24 AM
Subject: Pending Agent Orange Exposure Legislation

Dear Editor,

As Chairs of the District 8 VFW and Auxiliary Legislative Committees we recently posted a letter to the Editor in our local papers addressing pending Agent Orange Legislation. At that time, we requested the public to contact their Congress people asking them to support a specific bill pertaining to Agent Orange and to encourage House Speaker Boehner to introduce [H.R. 3423](#), the Agent Orange Extension Act of 2015. This act created a 2-year extension to the Agent Orange Act of 1991 (expiring on September 30th) a bill necessary so that the final report from the National Academy of Science, not due until March 2016, would be reviewed by the VA and any additional diseases showing clear evidence linking them to Agent Orange exposure would be added to the Presumptive Disease List.

Unfortunately, we became aware of the expiration of the 1991 Act as well as the existence of the extension bill in late August, far too late to launch an effective campaign to repair the damage that would be caused by the September 30th expiration date.

The information provided us by the Minnesota VFW Department states that attempts to include hypertension with its many causes and forms to the list of presumptives proved to be far too costly to the VA and the Act of 1991 was allowed to expire. What concerns us the most about the decision to allow that expiration is the fact that there is much evidence to suggest that the Veteran's exposure to Agent Orange can be affecting offspring three generations passed the exposed Veteran. To put it another way their children, grand and great grandchildren could find themselves dealing with the effects of Agent Orange exposure. The report due next March may indicate that linkage. However, the original Act of 1991 doesn't require the VA to review that report or add any additional diseases to the presumptive list as indicated by that report once it has expired.

With the fact that the VA is no longer required to do anything with the final report from the National Academy of Science we may never know if future generations are indeed dealing with Agent Orange related issues. It is incredible that something this significant and potentially damaging to the future of our families was allowed to simply slip away. There are some actions that can be taken to try to rectify this situation.

The first of which is to contact our Congress people and ask them to co-sponsor and support [H.R. 1769](#), The Toxic Exposure Research Act of 2015 introduced on 04/14/2015. This bill establishes in the Department of Veterans Affairs a "National Center for research on the diagnosis and treatment of health conditions of the descendants of Veterans exposed to toxic substances during service in the Armed Forces that are related to that exposure, to establish an advisory board on such health conditions and for other purposes." A positive to this bill is that it appears that it includes Military personnel beyond Vietnam to those currently serving in combat. The negative as far as we Vietnam Vets are concerned is the fact that the data collected to this point by the National Academy may or may not be used further delaying recognition of our family's health problems.

In addition, [H.R. 969](#) introduced 02/13/2015 in the House of Representatives and [S. 681](#),

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introduced in the Senate 02/0⁹/2015 are nearly identical bills to create the "Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2015. This is an act " To amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify presumptions relating to the exposure of certain Veterans who served in the vicinity of the Republic of Vietnam, and for other purposes."

Once again, we ask you to please contact your Senators and Congress people asking them to co-sponsor and support these important bills. Many "Blue Water Sailors" Naval personnel that were aboard vessels not qualified by definitions established by the VA have long been ignored in the Agent Orange exposure issue and they need our help bringing them into recognition and inclusion by the VA for illnesses caused by exposure to Agent Orange. There are members of other branches of the Armed Forces that may need to be recognized and included as well as future further research may indicate.

At this time all three of these bills are in sitting in Committee. By asking for co sponsorships to these bills we not only create a show of support for our Veterans but we greatly increase that these issues will be moved forward from Committee and into law.

We would encourage your readers to help us achieve passage of these bills by phoning or emailing using the form on their websites all 8 of our Minnesota Congressional people to encourage them to show that they are 100% in support of Minnesota's Veterans.

Respectfully submitted

Julie Stoehr
8th District VFW Auxiliary Legislative Chair 2015-2016
VFW Auxiliary President Post 1757 Cook MN

Mick Thompson
8th District VFW Legislative Chair 2015-2016
Senior Vice Commander VFW Post 4456 Gilbert MN

Congressional D.C. Phone numbers by MN District
For Bills H.R. 1769 & H.R.969

Senators D.0 Phone Numbers
For S 681 Bill

1st, Tim Walz (202) 225-2472 2nd,
John Kline (202) 225-2271 3rd, Erik
Paulsen (202) 225-6351 4th, Betty
McCollum (202) 225-6631 5th,
Keith Ellison (202) 225-4755 6th,
Tom Emmer (202) 225-2331 7th,
Collin Peterson (202) 225-2165 8th,
Rick Nolan (202) 225-6211

Amy Klobuchar (202) 224-3244
Al Franken (202) 224-5641