



## PRESS RELEASE

Vietnam Veterans of America

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### **Justice and Science Demand Passage of the *Blue Water Navy Act*, and Passage of the *Dental Care Eligibility Act*, VVA Tells Senate Veterans Committee**

(Washington, DC)—“The passage of *The Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act* by the Senate will correct a long-standing wrong,” said John Rowan, VVA National President. In testimony today before the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee, VVA testified that “when signed into law, this bipartisan legislation will reverse the Department of Veterans Affairs’ 2002 decision, which prevented Blue Water Navy veterans and those veterans who served near the DMZ in Korea and in bases in Thailand from claiming presumptive status if they suffer with diseases associated with herbicide exposure.

“Justice delayed is justice denied. Congress must delay no further and acknowledge that it is as likely as not these veterans were exposed to herbicides and should be accorded presumptive service connection for their disability claims,” said Rowan. “The scientific evidence links Agent Orange and other herbicides to life-threatening health conditions such as ischemic heart disease, various cancers, Type II diabetes, and Parkinson’s disease,” said Rowan. “A study by the Institute of Medicine (now the National Academy of Medicine) found the route to exposure of ships in the South China Sea to be biologically plausible. We believe such exposure has also led to birth defects, learning disabilities, and other health issues in the progeny of Vietnam veterans.”

Also pending before the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee is the *Veterans Dental Care Eligibility Expansion and Enhancement Act*, which calls for the VA to carry out a pilot program “to assess the feasibility and advisability of furnishing dental services and treatment to enrolled veterans who currently are not eligible for such services and treatment.” This bill also calls for the VA to initiate a program to educate veterans on the importance of dental health, a program that illustrates the association between dental health and overall health and well-being. “If this pilot project proves successful, as we believe it will, the introduction of dental services for veterans who have a disability rating of less than 100 percent will have a positive effect on their overall health and wellness,” Rowan said.

