



## PRESS RELEASE

Vietnam Veterans of America

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### **Vietnam Veterans of America Calls for the Senate to Pass H.R. 299, and rename it the *John S. McCain Blue Water Navy Bill***

**(Washington, DC)**— “Vietnam Veterans of America calls on the U.S. Senate to honor Vietnam War hero and Navy veteran John S. McCain by passing *H.R. 299, The Blue Water Navy Act*, and renaming this critical bill in his honor,” said John Rowan, VVA National President.

“From his time in captivity in the Hanoi Hilton, where he spurned his captors’ offer of early release, putting his fellow POWs first, to his final battle with glioblastoma, Senator John McCain has led an unparalleled life of service to our nation and his fellow Americans. Let us honor the service and sacrifice of Senator McCain by taking care of his fellow Navy Vietnam veterans, who are sick and dying due to their military service, and who unable to receive treatment and benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs,” said Rowan.

“Senator McCain’s final battle with glioblastoma, and more broadly cancer, is a fight that Vietnam veterans and our families know all too well. Countless patriots’ lives have been cut short, many of them related to Agent Orange, the toxic herbicide used to defoliate the jungles and waterways,” noted Rowan.

In an abrupt about face, in February 2002, the VA changed its rules, arbitrarily terminating benefits to the 534,300-plus Blue Water U.S. Navy, Coast Guard, and FMF Marine veterans serving in the waters of Southeast Asia, thereby limiting the scope of the *Agent Orange Act of 1991* to those veterans who could provide proof of “boots on the ground” in Vietnam. Suddenly, offshore veterans stopped receiving VA health care and disability compensation.

“The *John S. McCain Blue Water Navy Bill/Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2017*, when signed into law, would right this wrong and partially restore coverage to those aggrieved veterans who suffer from illnesses considered presumptive to exposure to Agent Orange and other toxic herbicides. This is a fitting tribute to a leader who has put the needs of his men before his own,” said Rowan.

