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VVA Condemns Obstruction of “Blue Water Navy” Bill by Sen. Enzi

(Washington, D.C.) -- “It is beyond disappointing that a single senator, Mike Enzi (R-WY), has obstructed *H.R. 299, Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act*, a bill that was passed in the U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 382-0 and would assuredly pass in the Senate if the members of that body were given the opportunity to vote on it,” said John Rowan, VVA National President.

On Monday, December 10, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) brought up the Blue Water Navy bill on the floor of the Senate. When she asked for unanimous consent, it was the senior senator from Wyoming, chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, who objected, citing cost concerns and saying that it would cause “budgetary and operational pressures that would happen at the VA.”

Earlier this year, VA Secretary Robert Wilkie voiced opposition to the legislation, reversing an earlier commitment by his predecessor, Dr. David Shulkin, to “do the right thing.”

“Congress is only too glad to throw money, and lots of it, at the Department of Defense for questionable programs, citing the need for a strong defense,” said Rowan. “The Senate is being prevented from ‘doing the right thing’ for a relative handful of veterans who served with honor in the waters off the coast of Vietnam and are now hurting from effects of exposure to Agent Orange.”

“Contrary to the VA’s assertions, we have the science that shows the pathways of exposure to this insidious herbicide. So we endorse the sentiments of two legislators, a Republican senator and a Democratic congressman, who make the case for passing this long-needed legislation.”

“This is an issue of justice,” said Senator Steve Daines (R-MT). “This is an issue of bureaucracy, frankly, not doing the intent of what Congress was, when it was originally passed. And this would clarify that so that we can make sure these vets get the benefits they deserve.”

“All too often,” said Rep. Tim Ryan (D-OH), “members of this Congress are willing to pay lip service to the sacrifices our military and military veterans make, then fall into the trap of playing politics when there’s a chance to actually do something to help them.”

