



LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES & POLICY INITIATIVES

118TH ★
CONGRESS



VVA Supports Amendment of the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019

When passed in 2019, the *Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act* (P.L.116-23) improved access to healthcare and benefits for Navy veterans who suffered due to Agent Orange exposure, by expanding the area of covered military service to 12 nautical miles, the standard sovereign claim of territorial waters under international law.

Understanding The Issue

While the original law was well-intentioned and fixed a long-standing oversight regarding eligibility for claims and benefits for Blue Water Vietnam veterans by granting presumptive benefits status to those who were exposed to Agent Orange, it only covers veterans who served on vessels out to twelve nautical miles seaward from the demarcation line on the waters of Vietnam and Cambodia. This excludes veterans who served further beyond this arbitrary boundary, yet were also potentially exposed to Agent Orange, and who suffer from its effects.

A recent study of over 50,000 participants indicates that these veterans were at a higher risk for respiratory cancers than non-theater and non-veteran study participants. The study -- *U.S. Blue Water Navy Veterans of the Vietnam War: Comparisons from the Vietnam Era Health Retrospective Observational Study (VE-HEROeS)*¹-- confirms prior studies conducted by the Australian government in 2002 and the Institute of Medicine in 2011. Access to toxic exposure healthcare for America's Navy veterans should not be dependent on whether they served on a swift boat or an aircraft carrier - everyone played their respective role in supporting the mission.

VVA calls on Congress to amend P.L. 116-23 to extend the nautical mile limitation sufficient to include U.S. Navy and Marine Corps Vietnam veterans who were assigned to the Vietnam Theater of Combat Operations or received the Vietnam Service Medal.

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) is the only national Vietnam Veterans organization congressionally chartered and exclusively dedicated to Vietnam-era veterans and their families.

www.vva.org

¹ [U.S. Blue Water Navy Veterans of the Vietnam War: Comparisons from the Vietnam Era Health Retrospective Observational Study \(VE-HEROeS\) - JMVH](#)