



6 January 2019

Chairman Mark Takano (CA-41)
420 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Takano:

On behalf of the below signed organizations that support the 90,000 Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans, which make up more than 50,000 supporters and members, we applaud Chairman Mark Takano for his introduction of H.R. 299, The Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019, which would restore the presumptions to these Veterans who served off the Coast of Vietnam.

This bipartisan legislation that has been introduced in every Congress since the 110th in 2008, is consistently one of the most co-sponsored pieces of legislation, and in the 115th, H.R. 299 seen 330 co-sponsors (155 Republicans / 175 Democrats) and its companion in the Senate S. 422 had 52 co-sponsors (14 Republicans / 38 Democrats). On June 25, 2018, HR 299 passed the House by a voice vote 382-0, unfortunately the legislation died in the Senate due to objection from 2 Senators, preventing it from going to the President's desk, but making more progress than any other Blue Water Navy bill in 10 years.

H.R. 299 would clarify presumptions related to the exposure of certain Navy veterans who served in the territorial waters of Vietnam during that conflict and authorize Agent Orange-related benefits. Despite scientific studies confirming their likely onboard exposure to dioxin and other chemicals that make up Agent Orange, these veterans have been denied access to service-related disability and other benefits arising from illnesses presumed caused by the exposure.

Our organizations have long maintained that these Veterans deserve equal treatment with other Veterans who set "boots on the ground" during the Vietnam War. That limitation was arbitrary, unfair and not based on science. Our coalition of organizations strongly supports H.R. 299 and urges the bill's early passage during this session of the 116th Congress.

Very Respectfully,

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