

**Legislative Alert #112-5: SUPPORT H.R. 3612 and S. 1629, Blue Water Navy  
Vietnam Veterans Legislation**  
HEALTHCARE

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**Issue Background:** During Vietnam, the United States military sprayed more than 19 million gallons of various “rainbow” herbicide combinations, but Agent Orange was used most often. The name “Agent Orange” came from the orange identifying stripe used on the 55-gallon drums in which it was stored from 1962 to 1971, used to remove trees and dense tropical foliage that provided enemy cover. What was once classified in the early 1980’s as a, “minor acne condition,” Agent Orange has met with thorough study and determination of an exposure to our servicemen that has caused severe illnesses such as various forms of cancer, Parkinson’s Disease, Lymphoma and many others. Often times U.S. Navy and Coast Guard vessels were in the vicinity of disbursement of these chemicals, exposing Agent Orange to Sailors.

**Action Required:** Contact your Senators and Representatives and urge them to support H.R. 3612, introduced by Representative Chris Gibson (R-NY-20) on [8 December 2012](#) and S. 1629, introduced by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) on [23 September 2011](#). The bills would amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify presumptions relating to the exposure of certain veterans who served in the vicinity of the Republic of Vietnam.

**Details (To Be Put Into Letter):**

During the Vietnam War, the U.S. Army sprayed more than 19 million gallons of herbicide called “Agent Orange” which contained a toxic chemical that has had devastating effects upon those who served in or around Vietnam, including numerous forms of cancer, diabetes and Parkinson’s disease. The Agent Orange Act of 1991 empowered the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to declare certain illnesses “presumptive” to exposure to Agent Orange and enable Vietnam veterans to receive disability compensation for these related conditions.

However, in 2002, the VA limited the scope of the Act to only those veterans who could provide orders for “boots on the ground” in Vietnam (encompassing infantry and riverine Navy). As a result, veterans who served in the waters off the coast of Vietnam, commonly called “blue water veterans” were forced to file individual claims with the VA to restore their benefits. The VA has denied 32,880 such claims through 2009 alone! H.R. 3612 and S. 1629 would extend presumptive coverage to blue water veterans who served up to 12 miles off shore Vietnam during [1962-1975](#). Presumptive coverage lifts the burden from the individual veteran to prove direct exposure to Agent Orange, a nearly impossible task due to a lack of record keeping and the inability to know the precise location of dioxins in the air and groundwater, and extends the same presumption that currently exists for veterans who served on land and inland waterways to those “blue water veterans.”

The Department of Veterans Affairs, however, released an updated list of U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships that were confirmed to have operated on Vietnam’s inland waterways, docked on shore, or had crewmembers sent ashore. This list, which can be found by going to the [website](#), can assist Vietnam veterans in determining potential eligibility for compensation benefits of Agent.

**Take Action:** You can e-mail the ‘Details’ section or edit as you desire. This is the quickest and

most effective method of expressing your views to Congress. Also, contact friends and family and urge them to use Contact Congress as well. Please direct any questions concerning this issue to our Director of Legislation, Anthony Wallis, at [703-548-5800](tel:703-548-5800) or at [Anthony.Wallis@ausn.org](mailto:Anthony.Wallis@ausn.org).