

Resolution No. 620

TOXIC EXPOSURES

WHEREAS, veterans who served in the territorial seas of Vietnam during the Vietnam War are arbitrarily and unjustly denied benefits for illnesses associated with Agent Orange exposure, to include veterans who served on ships presumed to be exposed to Agent Orange but whose service did not fall on the specific presumptive dates; and

WHEREAS, veterans who served along the Korean demilitarized zone before and after the April 1968 to August 1971 dates of presumptive exposure to Agent Orange suffer from conditions associated with Agent Orange exposure and are often denied service connection by the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, those who served on bases in Thailand during the Vietnam War era who suffer from conditions associated with Agent Orange are arbitrarily and unjustly denied service connection; and

WHEREAS, veterans of the Persian Gulf War suffer from an array of conditions and diseases, collectively known as Gulf War illness, while the causes remain unexplained and VA ignores Congress and continues a burdensome claims process; and

WHEREAS, veterans of current conflicts were exposed to numerous environmental hazards, including open air burn pits and the anti-malaria drug mefloquine; and

WHEREAS, veterans stationed at Woomera Air Force Station in Maralinga, South Australia, were exposed to radiation during nuclear weapons testing during the 1950's and 1960's; and

WHEREAS, for decades, veterans and dependents stationed at Fort McClellan, Alabama were exposed to Polychlorinated Biphenyl (PCB), and now suffer from associated conditions; and

WHEREAS, for decades, veterans and family members stationed at Camp Lejeune consumed contaminated water and now suffer from associated conditions. While VA acknowledged this fact, there are differences in what conditions are compensable and those which only receive reimbursement for medical care. Additionally, the requirement to be stationed on the base for 30 days is arbitrary and ignores thousands who graduated from training in less time; and

WHEREAS, the United States military has conducted testing, monitoring, and clean-up operations related to various chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons resulting in exposure; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to invest adequate resources to study, diagnose, and treat conditions and illnesses associated with toxic exposures; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress ensures that the Department of Defense expedites declassification efforts related to exposure events and that the Department of Veterans Affairs extends presumptive service connection to veterans suffering from conditions or illnesses found to be associated with exposure to toxic substances.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS