
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 149 Session of
2017

INTRODUCED BY JAMES, BARBIN, BARRAR, BOBACK, V. BROWN,
CALTAGIRONE, D. COSTA, DIAMOND, DIGIROLAMO, DRISCOLL,
ENGLISH, FEE, FREEMAN, GOODMAN, GROVE, A. HARRIS, KINSEY,
LONGIETTI, MARSHALL, MARSICO, MILLARD, MURT, PICKETT,
QUIGLEY, READSHAW, SACCONI, SAINATO, WARD, OBERLANDER AND
NEILSON, MARCH 16, 2017

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS, MARCH 16, 2017

A RESOLUTION

1 Relating to the presumption of a service connection for Agent
2 Orange exposure for certain Navy and Air Force veterans and
3 calling on the Congressional Delegation of the Commonwealth
4 of Pennsylvania to fully support and fund passage of the Blue
5 Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2017.

6 WHEREAS, During the Vietnam Conflict, the United States
7 military sprayed more than 22 million gallons of Agent Orange
8 and other herbicides over Vietnam to reduce forest cover and
9 crops used by the enemy; these herbicides contained dioxin,
10 which has since been identified as carcinogenic and has been
11 linked with a number of serious and disabling illnesses now
12 affecting thousands of veterans; and

13 WHEREAS, The Congress of the United States passed the Agent
14 Orange Act of 1991 to address the plight of veterans exposed to
15 herbicides while serving in Vietnam; and

16 WHEREAS, The act amended Title 38 of the United States Code
17 to presumptively recognize certain diseases as service connected

1 among military personnel who served in the Vietnam Conflict
2 between 1962 and 1975; and

3 WHEREAS, This presumption has provided access to appropriate
4 disability compensation and medical care for Vietnam veterans
5 diagnosed with such illnesses as type 2 diabetes, Hodgkin's
6 disease, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, chronic lymphocytic leukemia,
7 multiple myeloma, prostate cancer, respiratory cancers and soft
8 tissue sarcomas; and

9 WHEREAS, Pursuant to a 2001 directive, the United States
10 Department of Veterans Affairs policy has denied the presumption
11 of a service connection for herbicide-related illnesses to
12 Vietnam veterans who could not furnish written documentation
13 that they had "boots on the ground" in-country, making it
14 virtually impossible for countless United States Navy and Air
15 Force veterans to pursue their claims for benefits; and

16 WHEREAS, Many who had landed on Vietnamese soil could not
17 produce proof due to incomplete or missing military records,
18 moreover, personnel who had served on ships in the "Blue Water
19 Navy" in Vietnamese territorial waters were, in fact, exposed to
20 dangerous airborne toxins, which not only drifted offshore but
21 also washed into streams and rivers draining into the South
22 China Sea; and

23 WHEREAS, Warships positioned off the Vietnamese shore
24 routinely distilled seawater to obtain potable water; and

25 WHEREAS, A 2002 study conducted by the Australian Department
26 of Veterans' Affairs found that the distillation process, rather
27 than removing toxins, in fact, concentrated dioxin in water used
28 for drinking, cooking and washing; and

29 WHEREAS, This study also found that Vietnam veterans of the
30 Royal Australian Navy had a higher rate of mortality from Agent

1 Orange-associated diseases than did Vietnam veterans from other
2 branches of the military; and

3 WHEREAS, When the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
4 studied specific cancers among Vietnam veterans, it found a
5 higher risk of cancer among Navy veterans; and

6 WHEREAS, Agent Orange did not discriminate between soldiers
7 on the ground and sailors on ships offshore, and legislation to
8 recognize this tragic fact and restore eligibility for
9 compensation and medical care to Navy and Air Force veterans who
10 sacrificed their health for their country is critical; and

11 WHEREAS, When the Agent Orange Act passed in 1991 with no
12 dissenting votes, congressional leaders stressed the importance
13 of responding to the health concerns of Vietnam veterans and
14 ending the bitterness and anxiety that had surrounded the issue
15 of herbicide exposure; and

16 WHEREAS, Congress should reaffirm the nation's commitment to
17 the well-being of all of its veterans and direct the United
18 States Department of Veterans Affairs to administer the Agent
19 Orange Act under the presumption that herbicide exposure in
20 Vietnam includes the country's inland waterways, offshore waters
21 and airspace; therefore be it

22 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives respectfully urge
23 the Congress and the President of the United States to restore
24 the presumption of a service connection for Agent Orange
25 exposure for United States Navy and Air Force veterans who
26 served on the inland waterways, territorial waters and in the
27 airspace of Vietnam, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia; and be it
28 further

29 RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be sent to the
30 President of the United States, to the President of the Senate

1 and the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the United
2 States and to all the members of the Pennsylvania delegation to
3 the 115th Congress urging the members of the delegation to
4 support and fund the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of
5 2017 and with the request that this resolution be officially
6 entered in the Congressional Record as a memorial to the
7 Congress of the United States of America.