



T H E M I L I T A R Y C O A L I T I O N

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November 8, 2011

The Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senate
478 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Gillibrand:

The Military Coalition (TMC), a consortium of nationally prominent military and veteran organizations, representing more than 5.5 million members plus their families and survivors, appreciates your leadership in introducing S.1629, the Agent Orange Equity Act of 2011. Your bill would authorize presumptive service connection to “Blue Water” Navy Vietnam veterans on their disability claims for health conditions associated with exposure to Agent Orange (AO).

S. 1629 would modify VA’s definition of “service in the Republic of Vietnam”, which limits eligibility for presumptive service-connection for AO diseases only to those who actually set foot in, served on vessels that plied inland waterways, or put into port in the former South Vietnam as the standard for proving exposure. This definition excludes “Blue Water” veterans. The legislation would allow service members who served in the waters off the coast of Vietnam to file a claim for service-connected disabilities related to their exposure to AO.

In May 2011, the prestigious Institute of Medicine (IOM) released a report validating a 2002 Royal Australian Navy study that determined that the desalination process used by Australian and U.S. Navy ships off the coast of Vietnam magnified the concentration of dioxin (AO) exposure in the water. With this confirmation of likely exposure to AO in Blue Water sailors, TMC asserts there is no longer any valid rationale to exclude these service members from eligibility for presumptive service-connected disabilities associated with AO.

As our nation pauses to honor our veterans this week, The Military Coalition wishes to thank you for introducing S.1629, the Agent Orange Equity Act of 2011, and pledges our collective support for its early enactment.

Sincerely,

The Military Coalition
(Signatures enclosed)

Michael M. D...
Air Force Association

John ...
Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA)

Patricia K. Murphy
Air Force Women Officers
Associated

Stewart M. Hickey
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Jewish War Veterans of the USA

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Marine Corps League

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Richard F. Weidner
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