

July 30th, 2018

The Honorable Johnny Isakson
Chairman
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
131 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Isakson,

The National Military and Veterans Alliance (NMVA), a non-partisan advocacy group comprised of the undersigned military and veteran service organizations, is pleased to offer our support for HR 299. HR 299 - The Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act - recognizes and brings relief to veterans who, during active military, naval, or air service, served offshore of the Republic of Vietnam during the period beginning on January 9, 1962, and ending on May 7, 1975 by amending Title 38 to recognize the presumption that these veterans have been exposed to the herbicide Agent Orange, notwithstanding that there is no record of evidence of such disease during the period of such service.

Our organizations are all familiar with the history of Agent Orange and its use in Vietnam. The United States spread over 20,000,000 gallons of the potent chemical-laced herbicide over southern Vietnam throughout the 1960's and first part of the 1970's. These areas included coastal regions and the areas around rivers and streams that emptied into the South China Sea where our Blue Water Navy service members operated.

U.S. Government-initiated studies have proven that Agent Orange causes cancer and birth defects and there are now numerous documented ways that "Blue Water" sailors, like their "Brown Water" shipmates, were exposed to Agent Orange while serving aboard ships in these contaminated areas.

One of the benefits of military service, whether in peace or in a time of war, is the peace of mind that comes with knowing that veterans and their families will be cared for. Politics should, under no circumstances, ever interfere with that peace of mind. The adoption of HR 299 will ensure that the veterans and their families who have suffered from the use of Agent Orange by the United States in Vietnam will finally receive the care and relief they need.

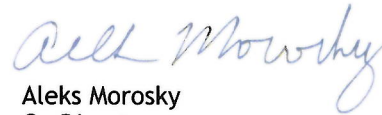
NMVA is also pleased that H.R. 299 solves another inequity by finally extending the VA Home Loan funding fee waiver to active duty Purple Heart recipients. Currently, this waiver is granted only to veterans with VA service-connected disabilities, and we see absolutely no reason why combat-wounded service members, the vast majority of whom will almost certainly qualify for VA disability compensation upon discharge, should be denied this significant benefit, simply because they continue to serve in uniform.

NMVA thanks you for your leadership on these issues and your commitment to service members, veterans, retirees and their families. We look forward to working with you to ensure the passage of this important legislation.

Sincerely,



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National Military and Veterans Alliance Member Organizations Supporting this Letter

American Military Society
American Retirees Association
AMVETS
Armed Forces Retirees Association
Army and Navy Union
Association of the United States Navy
Military Order of Foreign Wars
Military Order of the Purple Heart
Military Order of the World Wars
Naval Enlisted Reserve Association
Reserve Officers Association
Society of Military Widows
The Flag & General Officers Network
The Independence Fund
The Retired Enlisted Association
Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors
Vietnam Veterans of America