

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 24, 2021

The Honorable Denis R. McDonough
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write to ensure our Vietnam Veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange during their military service to our nation get the care they need and deserve.

We specifically ask that you expedite the implementation of new benefits that allow Vietnam Veterans suffering from Agent Orange-related illnesses to get disability benefits to which they were previously not entitled.

As you know, the fiscal year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) included a provision (Sec. 9109) that added three new medical conditions to the presumptive list for diseases associated with exposure to Agent Orange: Parkinsonism, Bladder Cancer, and Hypothyroidism. With this authorization in place, the only barrier left for impacted Veterans to start receiving benefits is for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to implement these changes.

While we understand the VA is carefully examining the provisions of the law to determine what regulations will be required to implement them, we believe waiting for what can typically take 18-24 months for rulemaking could be a matter of life or death for some of our veterans. With these concerns in mind we respectfully request answers to the following questions:

- 1) What is the VA doing to accelerate this process and what mechanisms are you using to ensure these veterans are quickly counted in the disability compensation program?
- 2) Specifically, is there anything that can be done in the interim to provide benefits for these veterans?

We have heard so many heartbreaking stories from of our veterans who deserve not only our admiration, but the support and care to which they are entitled. Thank you for your commitment to serving our nation's heroes and we look forward to working with you on this issue.

Sincerely,



Lois Frankel
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Elaine G. Luria
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Mike Levin
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Raul M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Conor Lamb
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Peter Welch
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Andre Carson
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Tim Ryan
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Susie Lee
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Elissa Slotkin
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Lucy McBath
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Brian Higgins
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Antonio Delgado
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Darren Soto
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Joe Courtney
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Rick Larsen
Member of Congress

_____/s/
William R. Keating
Member of Congress

_____/s/
David Price
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Julia Brownley
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

_____/s/
David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Mike Thompson
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Jenniffer Gonzalez-Colon
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Dina Titus
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Bill Foster
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Aumua Amata C. Radewagen
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan Jr.
Member of Congress

_____/s/
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson Jr.
Member of Congress

_____/s/
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress