

Dear Senator

I and tens of thousands of ill and dying Vietnam Era War Vets who served in Thailand need your help. We are fighting overly restrictive Department of Veterans Affairs guidelines to obtain disability compensation for illnesses caused by exposure to toxic herbicides while we served in Thailand.

The VA requires that we prove our duties placed us “on or near the perimeter” of our assigned bases and remote sites to qualify for benefits. This restriction fails to accept the reality that these lethally potent and persistent herbicides spread far and wide from their original perimeter area applications. As examples, 1) contaminants adhered to the boots, clothing, and equipment of anybody who was living or worked on or near the perimeter. When their duty day ended, they unknowingly transferred these contaminants throughout the common areas of the base (barracks, dining facilities, mail room, gymnasium, chapel, exchange, theater, concessions, etc.), 2) during rainy weather the tires of vehicles which patrolled the perimeter became encrusted with contaminated mud and debris which was subsequently transferred to wherever those vehicles transited, and 3) during the dry season, turbulence from aircraft and helicopters crossing the perimeter would stir up contaminated dust which then rode the natural winds deeper into the bases. Much like a pandemic, these contaminants were then spread to other areas by unknowing personnel, vehicles, and equipment movements. Anyone who was there would today rightly conclude “that stuff had to be everywhere!” That explains why so many service members NOT near the perimeter developed illnesses also!

For background, scientific testing has shown the Agent Orange contaminant “dioxin” (TCDD) can create significant health issues at an infinitesimally small exposure of two parts per trillion...the equivalent of a single drop of water in 10 Olympic-size pools. It is also known that deadly dioxin levels equivalent to 50,000,000 parts per trillion were found in some test samples of Agent Orange...25,000,000 times the recognized toxicity level of 2ppt!

As young soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines, we looked at these herbicide applications as simple “weed killing” operations. Years later we, the nation, and the world understood the dire consequences of Agent Orange with the tragic legacy it thrust upon our Vietnam-based brethren. Most Thailand based vets did not learn of their exposure to this and similar toxic herbicidal agents until four or five decades after the fact – long after many of our illnesses began to take their toll. We thought we were just getting old and that these illnesses were to be expected with age. Many of our fellow vets and friends died of their illnesses never knowing they were contaminated by toxic herbicides. Many (if not most) of us feel we have been forgotten by our government in our time of greatest need.

Senator _____, you can help rectify this situation! SB 1381 and HR 2201 establish a “boots on the ground policy for all Thailand vet...the same policy afforded Vietnam-based and Navy “blue water” vets. We fought the same war, were exposed to the same toxins, and have developed the same diseases and illnesses. Thailand-based vets should not have to prove proximity to a fence to qualify for deserved and needed disability compensation.

As a concerned American that cares about her veterans I urge your prompt co-sponsorship and vigorous support of these bills and encourage your efforts to convince fellow legislators in both chambers and parties to support and seek their prompt passage. Doing so will have a profoundly

positive affect for many thousands of deserving veterans who honorably did their duty when their country called upon them half a century ago.

Respectfully,

Name