

News from Senator

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AGENT ORANGE ACT OF 1991

I RISE TODAY TO SUPPORT H.R. 556, THE AGENT ORANGE ACT OF 1991. THIS BILL IS A WORKABLE COMPROMISE OF MANY DIFFERENT GROUPS AND MANY DIFFERENT OPINIONS ON THE CONTENTIOUS ISSUES INVOLVED IN SEEKING A FAIR AND EQUITABLE TREATMENT FOR OUR NATION'S VETERANS.

THIS LEGISLATION WILL GIVE US AN OPPORTUNITY TO REACH AN INDEPENDENT SCIENTIFIC CONCLUSION ON THE EFFECTS OF AGENT ORANGE EXPOSURE. THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCE WILL STUDY THE EVIDENCE AND PROVIDE THE VA WITH ITS CONCLUSION ON THE INFORMATION, REPORTS AND STUDIES THAT HAVE BEEN PRODUCED OVER THE YEARS. THIS LEGISLATION WILL ESTABLISH THE DATA BASE FOR BLOOD AND TISSUE RESEARCH THAT WILL PRODUCE THE INFORMATION NECESSARY TO MAKE A VALID AND SUBSTANTIATED CONCLUSION ON THE LONGTERM EFFECTS OF AGENT ORANGE EXPOSURE. FURTHER, IT WILL ALLOW THE VA TO TEST ANY BLOOD SAMPLE VOLUNTARILY PROVIDED BY A VETERAN WHO SEEKS A PRIORITY ELIGIBILITY FOR DIOXIN EXPOSURE.

BUT THIS BILL GOES FARTHER THAN JUST ANOTHER STUDY. IT WILL ESTABLISH THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR ADDING THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE VA SERVICE-CONNECTION DISABILITY COMPENSATION. THE VA WILL FINALLY HAVE THE FLEXIBILITY AND THE AUTHORITY TO AMEND DISABILITY COMPENSATION IN FUTURE YEARS FOR DISEASES THAT MAY HAVE BEEN A DIRECT RESULT OF AGENT ORANGE EXPOSURE.

I AM PARTICULARLY PLEASED THAT THIS BILL WILL CODIFY THE DISABILITY COMPENSATION FOR CANCERS THAT THE CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL FOUND A CLEAR UNDISPUTED LINK TO AGENT ORANGE EXPOSURE. THIS GIVES IMMEDIATE HELP TO THOSE VETERANS IN NEED OF TREATMENT TODAY.

THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HAS BEEN IN THE CENTER OF THE AGENT ORANGE CONTROVERSY FOR MANY YEARS. THE ISSUE HAS RAGED FOR THESE YEARS WITH HARD FOUGHT OPINIONS, RHETORIC AND OFTEN ACCUSATIONS ON ALL SIDES. I BELIEVE THAT THIS LEGISLATION GIVES US THE OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE WE CAN DISSIPATE THE RHETORIC AND CONTROVERSY AND GET ON WITH EVERYONES REAL GOAL-THE BEST POSSIBLE CARE TO THOSE VALIANT AMERICANS THAT ANSWERED WHEN THEIR NATION CALLED- THE VETERANS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

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