
NATIONAL MILITARY **NMVA** & VETERANS ALLIANCE
STRENGTH THROUGH COLLABORATION

May 24th, 2019

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

The Honorable Jon Tester
Ranking Member
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
131 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Isakson and Ranking Member Tester,

The National Military and Veterans Alliance (NMVA), a non-partisan advocacy group comprised of the undersigned (page 2) military and veteran service organizations, is pleased to offer our support for H.R. 299. H.R. 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. The bill amends 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. The bill passed the House of Representatives on May 14th by a vote of 410-0 and now awaits Senate Committee action.

Under your leadership last year, the Committee passed similar legislation to the Senate floor in late December, 2018. Unfortunately, the bill was blocked by Senators Mike Lee, R-UT and Mike Enzi, R-WY on procedural votes in the closing days of the last Congress. We, once again, strongly urge you and your committee to advance this bill without delay so that our aging Vietnam Veterans can receive the full measure of care that they have earned and waited decades to receive. Furthermore, the passage of this bill would contribute greatly toward rectifying the many wrongs that our Vietnam veterans have experienced.

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 urge the Committee to move swiftly to advance this important legislation, and look forward to working with you to secure its passage by the full Senate.

Sincerely,



Ted Painter
Co-Director
National Military & Veterans Alliance
Executive Director
Armed Forces Retirees Association
508-335-3616
painter@armedforcesretirees.org



Aleks Morosky
Co-Director
National Military & Veterans Alliance
National Legislative Director
Military Order of the Purple Heart
703-642-5360 Ext. 117
aleksmorosky@purpleheart.org

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