

## 2011-K852

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION urging the New York State Congressional delegation to support the Agent Orange Equity Act of 2011

WHEREAS, Senators Gillibrand and Graham introduced the Agent Orange Equity Act of 2011 (AOEA); the bill was presented to restore VA benefits to approximately 250,000 Navy veterans who have been exposed to Agent Orange while serving in the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, Currently, Navy veterans who served in Vietnam are unable to receive disability or health benefits for medical issues related to the effects of Agent Orange because of a technicality stemming from 2002; and

WHEREAS, Presently, there is a Bill in the Senate, S-1629 (AOEA), and in the House, HR-3612, seeking to help Navy service members affected by Agent Orange gain benefits; and

WHEREAS, According to Cancer.org, and VA.gov/AgentOrange, the United States military sprayed an estimated 20 million gallons of herbicides in Vietnam to remove jungle foliage; Agent Orange is a toxic chemical with devastating effects and strong links to several forms of cancer and numerous neurological diseases; and

WHEREAS, Initially, Congress passed a law that required the VA to provide coverage to all Vietnam veterans who had illnesses directly related to Agent Orange exposure; in 2002, the VA, in what the The Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Association alleges as "possible selective discrimination", decided to provide the health care and disability benefits only to "boots on the ground" service members; and

WHEREAS, The United States Navy has been excluded ever since; Agent Orange has been verified, through various studies and reports, as a wide spreading chemical that was able to reach Navy ships through the air and waterborne distribution routes; and

WHEREAS, The bill presented by Senators Gillibrand and Graham would elucidate the existing laws; Blue Water veterans would be able to receive full coverage from the VA if they served 12 miles off of the Vietnam shore; the problem is, bills like AOEA have gone before Congress in past years; and

WHEREAS, Recommending the passing of AOEA provides our veterans the support they need to overturn this technicality and improve their quality of life; benefits should be provided to those who became ill as a result of their service to our country; and

WHEREAS, More than 30 Veterans Service Organizations support the Agent Orange Equity Act of 2011; by not passing AOEA, a precedent could be set to selectively provide certain groups with injury related medical care while denying other groups without any financial, scientific or consistent reasoning; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the New York State Congressional delegation be and hereby is respectfully memorialized by this Legislative Body to support the Agent Orange Equity Act of 2011; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to each member of the Congressional delegation from the State of New York.