

HCR 27 - Honor and recognize Vietnam War Agent Orange victims

Testimony of David K. Root

Before the Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee

Tuesday, November 15, 2022

Chairman Hoagland, Vice Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Thomas, and Members of the Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee, good afternoon and thank you for allowing me to give testimony today in favor of House Concurrent Resolution 27.

My name is David Root. I am a resident of Elyria, Ohio. I am a past State Commander for the *Department of Ohio, Veterans of Foreign Wars*. Currently I am serving my third term as Legislative Co-Chairman for the *Ohio VFW*. I am a US Navy Veteran who served from April of 1966 to January of 1970. I am the son of a Sailor, I am the father of a Sailor, and just recently I became the proud grandfather of a Sailor.

My new sailor grandson just embarked on a Western Pacific cruise last week. His first I did three of them. I can only hope that his WestPac cruise will be quite different than mine were. On mine I spent most of the six or seven months each time off the coast of Vietnam in the Gulf of Tonkin. His, hopefully they will be more peaceful.

Since 2010 I have gone to Washington, DC every year and met with Ohio Congressmen and Senators to discuss the many issues the VFW wanted to see Congress work on for our veterans and active-duty service men and women. High on the list of bills each year was the Blue Water Navy Act. Congress had passed the 'Veterans' Dioxin and Radiation Exposure Compensation Standards Act in 1984', but it only covered our service personnel who had 'boots on the ground'. It took us another 35 years to convince congress that the sailors and marines living on the waters of the Gulf were also affected by agent Orange. Finally, the 'Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019' was signed into law on June 25, 2019. But it's not over. We still go head-to-head with Congress on Agent Orange issues. The recently passed 'Honor Our Pact Act' added more presumptive illnesses from Agent Orange exposure.

Last month I was at a Veterans Roundtable organized by Senator Sherrod Brown. We were in Medina, and I warned him that we weren't done with Agent Orange -that we haven't begun to see the effects on the second, third and fourth generations yet. I told him about my daughter. She was born with only one kidney and a deformed uterus. The VA will never admit it, but I blame Agent Orange. Because of the deformed uterus my daughter had three miscarriages and one stillborn little boy. Her last miscarriage almost killed her, and she had to have emergency surgery

to have most of her internal reproductive system removed. On a happy note, though... our daughter was able to give us one awesome granddaughter that my wife and I cherish every day.

Agent Orange has affected the health of thousands and will affect the health and wellbeing of tens of thousands before we are rid of it. The men and women who fought in Vietnam on the ground and in its waters not only proved their metal day in and day out, but they deserve all the respect and praise we can give them. A simple proclamation from the entire Ohio General Assembly is an outstanding way to honor and recognize all those who have become victims of Agent Orange. A small token that just might ease some of the pain and suffering they now face day in and day out.

Mr. Chairman and members of this Committee, I urge you to follow the example set by the members of the House and unanimously pass HCR 27. In my humble opinion -today would not be too soon to do so.

Thank you again for allowing me to testify in favor of this resolution. I would be happy to answer any question the committee might have.

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