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**House Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee
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Good morning Chair Ghanbari, Vice Chair Loychik, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Concurrent Resolution 27, which recognizes and honors victims of Agent Orange from the Vietnam War. A similar measure was recently passed by the Tennessee General Assembly. Lake County resident and Vietnam War veteran Arnold Stanko, who has been a terrific advocate, brought this matter to my attention.

Between 1961 and 1971, the United States Armed Forces utilized Agent Orange to destroy enemy crops and vegetation as part of its herbicidal warfare program, Operation Ranch Hand. In just ten years, more than 20 million gallons of Agent Orange were sprayed, exposing some 2.6 million American soldiers to harmful and toxic chemicals.

Upon returning home from duty, many of these service members developed severe and often fatal illnesses due to Agent Orange exposure. These diseases included leukemia, lymphoma, myeloma, heart disease, and various forms of respiratory cancer. In fact, every day, approximately 300 deaths occur among Vietnam veterans who endured Agent Orange exposure. While their fallen comrades are memorialized in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, victims of Agent Orange are not recognized as official casualties of the Vietnam War.

As we've seen throughout our nation's history, the men and women of our military have safeguarded the individual and collective freedoms we all cherish. And to those who have given their lives in service of this great country, we are forever grateful. Unfortunately, for too long, victims of Agent Orange have been overlooked, and I believe it's well past time we recognize and honor their sacrifice. What this resolution does is ensure the heroism of every soldier who paid the ultimate sacrifice in Vietnam is properly acknowledged.

And with that, I want to thank the committee for allowing me to testify on this important resolution, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.