

Co-sponsor H.R. 1428

“ To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide wartime disability compensation for certain veterans with Parkinson's disease.”

H.R. 1428, “To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide wartime disability compensation for certain veterans with Parkinson's disease” is sponsored by Rep. Bob Filner (CA), Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. This bill directs the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs to provide presumption of service connection for Parkinson's disease for certain Veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam.

Parkinson's disease is a progressive and degenerative disease with no cure. These Veterans with Parkinson's disease face a less than bright future. Current regulations do not recognize Parkinson's disease as presumptive to the exposure of herbicides (Agent Orange and other herbicides) during military service. This legislation would allow those veterans to obtain the medical care and disability compensation that they have earned, deserve and so desperately need.

At a time when these Veterans' and their families are struggling to deal with devastating impact of Parkinson's disease, it is hard for them to find the strength to fight through the current VA claims process. Often as the disease progresses, the quality of life and financial struggle become worse and the spouses of these Veterans leave their own jobs to provide the care these Veterans require.

Scientific studies provide ample evidence establishing that Parkinson's disease is associated with military service in Vietnam and to these chemicals. The Mayo Clinic found that herbicides significantly increased the risk of Parkinson's disease. The Agent Orange herbicide 2,4-D was at the top of the list of herbicides in the study. In another study the Dr. L. Nelson from Stanford University found that Veterans who deployed to Vietnam have a 2.6 times higher incident of Parkinson's disease than Veterans of the same era who did not deploy.

Currently the VA almost exclusively denies claims for Parkinson's disease related to these chemical exposures. However in December of 2008, the VA Regional Office in Detroit Michigan approved a claim for Parkinson's disease due to exposure to Agent Orange. This approval was the only one we are aware of that has been approved by the VA at this level. The approval cited the Mayo Clinic study and other extensive research documentation as a reason for approval. There are also two known cases where the Board of Veterans' Appeal ruled in favor of the favor of the Veteran in regard to Parkinson's disease and service in Vietnam. In January 2009 the VA posted a clinical trial recruitment notice on the internet. In this notice the VA acknowledged that there is a higher incident of Parkinson's disease in Veteran than in non-Veterans.

The Vietnam Veterans in our grass roots group have already suffered with Parkinson's disease for an average of almost 7 years now and some for over 25 years. Others in the group passed away under the age of 60. These Veterans need help now not after they die. Please co-sponsor this bill.

To become a co-sponsor please contact Jeff Burdette at 59154 or jeff.burdette@mail.house.gov

U.S. Military Veterans with Parkinson's (USMVP) March. 2009.

