

**No. R-508. Joint resolution urging Congress to enact the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2013.**

(J.R.H.21)

Offered by: Representatives Strong of Albany, Batchelor of Derby, Branagan of Georgia, Devereux of Mount Holly, Donaghy of Poultney, Fagan of Rutland City, Gage of Rutland City, Head of South Burlington, Helm of Fair Haven, Lawrence of Lyndon, Lewis of Berlin, Moran of Wardsboro, Morrissey of Bennington, Myers of Essex, O'Sullivan of Burlington, Russell of Rutland City, Savage of Swanton, Stevens of Waterbury, Van Wyck of Ferrisburgh, and Weed of Enosburgh

Whereas, during the Vietnam War, the U.S. military sprayed millions of gallons of Agent Orange and other herbicides over combat areas to reduce the forest and crop covers that shielded enemy forces, and

Whereas, these herbicides contained dioxin, now identified as carcinogenic, linked to disabling illnesses affecting thousands of veterans, and

Whereas, Congress enacted the Agent Orange Act of 1991 to address the plight of Vietnam veterans exposed to these herbicides, and this act has provided the legal authority for federal compensation based on a presumption that herbicide exposure caused these veterans' illnesses, and

Whereas, in 2002, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs directed that Agent Orange Act compensation be limited to Vietnam Veterans who can document on-the-ground military service or having been stationed on a ship operating on the country's inland waterways, and

Whereas, these service criteria exclude U.S. Navy personnel who only served on the ocean waters (blue water) off the Vietnamese coast, except if they are diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma, and

Whereas, an Australian study found the possible presence of dioxin in the distilled water of Royal Australian Naval vessels that served in coastal Vietnamese waters, and the Australian Navy Vietnam Veterans are covered under a government policy similar to the Agent Orange Act of 1991, and

Whereas, U.S. Representative Chris Gibson of New York introduced the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2013 (H.R.543) to provide full Agent Orange Act of 1991 compensation benefits to Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans, with over 180 cosponsors, including U.S. Representative Peter Welch, and with the support of many veterans service organizations, and

Whereas, Congress should reaffirm its commitment to the well-being of all our nation's veterans, especially those exposed to carcinogenic herbicides during the Vietnam War, now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly urges Congress to enact the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2013, and be it further

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Association, the Department of Vermont Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Vermont Office of Veterans Affairs, and the Vermont Congressional Delegation.