



**THREAT:** Eliminate presumptive service-connected conditions for disabled and ill veterans

**SITUATION:** Some in Congress want to make it almost impossible to create new presumptions by requiring medical studies that show exposure to Agent Orange, caused a new disability. Today the law requires only a showing of a positive association between the toxic exposure and the new disability. With the presumption that the new disability is related to the in-service toxic exposure, veterans are relieved of the burden of proving that the exposure caused their disability.

**VFW POSITION:**

- The VFW opposes proposed changes to determine presumptive conditions.
- Based on biennial reports of the Institutes of Medicine (IOM), VA has determined that 15 disabilities are either positively associated or suggestively associated with exposure to herbicides. Changing the rules now would be unjust to current and future veterans.
- The proposed change would require medical evidence that herbicide exposure “caused” a new disability. Under this standard, only five of the 15 presumptive disabilities now approved by VA would be recognized.
- The proposal to change presumptive rules would place an undue burden on future veterans seeking care and compensation for Agent Orange or other toxic exposures.
- This proposal isn’t just an effort to restrict new presumptions based on exposure to herbicides. It also establishes a precedent which will be used to restrict benefits for all other veterans who were exposed to toxic substances during their military service.
- The current law requiring medical evidence of association is strong enough to protect the interests of the American people while assuring veterans they will receive medical treatment and compensation for their service connected disabilities.
- Changing this law is an obvious attempt to save money by limiting the number of veterans who can receive medical treatment or compensation for service connected disabilities.