

House Unanimously Passes Blue Water Navy Veterans Act!

Enactment will positively impact thousands, says VFW National Commander

May 14, 2019

WASHINGTON – The national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is saluting the U.S. House of Representatives for unanimously passing H.R. 299, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019.

“The VFW salutes the united support of the entire House,” said VFW National Commander B.J. Lawrence. “Your vote this evening will positively impact thousands of lives, and it once again proves that taking care of veterans and their families is a nonpartisan issue.”

The VFW-supported bill now heads to the Senate. Once signed into law, H.R. 299 will restore VA benefits to thousands of so-called Blue Water Navy Vietnam veterans who had their disability eligibility taken away in 2002 after regulatory changes. It will also require the VA to contact those veterans who had filed claims that were later denied. Those veterans could be eligible for retroactive benefits.

The legislation will also mark a victory for other veterans and their families who suffer from conditions related to toxic exposures. Veterans exposed to Agent Orange while serving along the Korean DMZ will have an earlier start date to encompass the timeframe when various defoliants were tested. The current start date of April 1, 1968, will be backed up seven months to Sept. 1, 1967.

In addition, benefits will expand to include children born with spina bifida due to a parent’s exposure in Thailand. Coverage for this condition already exists for the children of Vietnam and Korean DMZ veterans. The new law will also require the VA to report on research being conducted on a broad range of conditions possibly related to service in Southwest Asia, which is important for future legislative efforts to create a list of presumptive conditions for veterans seeking VA health care and benefits.

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“The Senate failed to pass H.R. 299 in the previous Congress,” said Lawrence. “We cannot allow this to happen again, which is why I am urging every veteran, family member and advocate to contact their U.S. senators to get this bill passed and signed into law now!”

Contact your United States senator [here](#).