

VFW Urges President to Quickly Sign Blue Water Navy Act

New law will impact thousands of veterans and dependent children

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WASHINGTON – The national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is urging President Trump to quickly sign into law H.R. 299, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019, which the Senate passed this evening by unanimous consent. The U.S. House of Representatives passed the VFW-supported legislation on May 14 by a vote of 410-0.

“We salute the entire 116th Congress for ensuring that taking care of veterans remains the most bipartisan and bicameral issue in Washington,” said VFW National Commander B.J. Lawrence. “We now urge the president to quickly sign the bill into law so that tens of thousands of Vietnam veterans can have their disability benefits restored, and well as an expansion of benefits to military dependents, veterans of the Korean DMZ, and those exposed to toxic hazards in Southwest Asia.”

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 arbitrary regulatory changes. The bill also benefits veterans exposed to Agent Orange while serving along the Korean DMZ by having an earlier start date to encompass the timeframe when various defoliants were tested—to Sept. 1, 1967, instead of April 1, 1968—and benefits will expand to children born with spina bifida due to a parent’s exposure in Thailand, coverage for conditions that 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.

“The VFW is proud of the 116th Congress,” said Lawrence, “and we hope the president quickly signs H.R. 299 into law so that more veterans and their dependent children can be

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