



May 28th, 2014

The Honorable Chris Gibson
19th District, New York
U.S. House of Representatives
1708 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Gibson,

On behalf of the 1.2 million members of AMAC, the Association of Mature American Citizens, I am writing to offer support to H.R. 543, the “Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2013.” This important piece of legislation would provide vital benefits to “blue water veterans,” who served up to 12 miles off the coast of Vietnam from 1962-1975.

Following the end of the Vietnam War, the U.S. government linked a toxic chemical found in Agent Orange to a number of serious medical conditions and cancers. A recent report by the Institute of Medicine found that plausible routes for exposure to Agent Orange exist for blue water veterans. While many Vietnam veterans already receive disability compensation for their exposure to Agent Orange, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has yet to extend the same assistance to veterans serving just offshore during the war. As a result, 32,880 individual blue water veteran claims have been denied by the VA through 2009.

Given how difficult it is to prove direct exposure to Agent Orange, H.R. 543 would extend presumptive coverage to blue water veterans – the same presumption that currently exists for veterans who served on land and inland waterways. Thus, this bill would cover certain claims for disability compensation from blue water veterans suffering from diseases that have been connected to Agent Orange. AMAC believes H.R. 543 is crucial to ensuring that blue water veterans who were exposed to this harmful chemical are afforded the same benefits and treatments as other Vietnam veterans.

Like many Americans, AMAC remains very concerned with how our veterans are cared for and treated. AMAC strongly feels that this legislation appropriately honors the sacrifices made by our veterans and that it will enable the VA to serve our veterans better in the future. Thanks to your attention for this significant issue and your concern for American heroes, AMAC is proud to support the H.R. 543, the “Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2013.”

Sincerely,
Dan Weber
President and Founder of AMAC