

DAV urges administration to move forward with presumptive diseases linked to Agent Orange



Since the Agent Orange Act of 1991, the Department of Veterans Affairs has established a presumption of service connection for 14 diseases associated with Agent Orange exposure, based on National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine reports.

However, in a report required by Congress in the Fiscal Year 2020 Appropriations bill, the VA called into question the scientific evidence put forth by the academies, noting “significant concerns and limitations” in the findings related to adding four new presumptive conditions. The VA also cited additional requirements in the department’s standards for presumptive conditions, delaying the consideration of care and compensation for thousands of veterans.

“Vietnam veterans have been coping with substantial health concerns that can be attributed to Agent Orange exposure for decades,” said Deputy National Legislative Director for Benefits Shane Liermann. “Thousands have died and many have been left to endure diseases that have been scientifically linked to the herbicide, and the VA’s continued delays are causing additional suffering for Vietnam veterans and their

families.”

The VA released its reasons for delaying presumption on four illnesses connected to Agent Orange. Those conditions—bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, Parkinson-like symptoms and high blood pressure—affect an estimated 83,000 veterans.

In its report, the VA announced plans to delay coverage pending the results of additional research, even though the academy reports have offered sufficient evidence for the VA to add these four presumptive illnesses to the list of veterans’ diseases associated with Agent Orange.

“Many of the men and women who served in Vietnam, and their families, have been waiting for three years or more to receive a positive decision, one that could finally get them the justice and benefits they deserve,” said Liermann. “DAV rallied our fellow veterans service organizations and drafted a letter to call on the president to intervene and end their wait by adding bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, Parkinson-like symptoms and hypertension to the list of Agent Orange presumptive conditions for disability benefits immediately. We will keep up the fight for as long as it takes.”

Learn more

You can follow along with updates to this and other legislation affecting veterans and their families by joining DAV CAN (Commander’s Action Network) at davcan.org.