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# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 112<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

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## *House of Representatives*

# GIVING OUR COMBAT VETERANS WHAT THEY DESERVE!

**HON. BOB FILNER**

OF CALIFORNIA  
IN THE HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. Speaker, in passing the Agent Orange related laws in 1984 and 1991, Congress made clear that it wanted to ensure that a fair and independent system was established to determine the relationship between herbicide exposure and the manifestation of certain diseases in our veterans.

Congress also was concerned that exposure to Agent Orange could not be determined by tracking troop movements.

As such, my bill, H.R. 812, the Agent Orange Equity Act of 2011, would expand the eligibility for presumptive conditions to combat veterans of the Vietnam War to include Blue Water veterans, those who received the Vietnam Service Medal and the Vietnam

Campaign Medal, or served on Johnston Island during a specified period when undisputed evidence shows 250,000 gallons of Agent Orange leaked and contaminated the scarce water supply.

Before 2002, VA relied on veterans providing evidence of receipt of the Vietnam Service Medal to allow veterans to be presumptively service-connected for diseases identified as being related to Agent Orange exposure.

Against public outcry, VA unjustifiably reversed its own regulations.

H.R. 812 would reinstate this practice by requiring VA to go back to this fair way of determining service-connection

and equitably adjudicating these claims.

These are benefits that these veterans have earned, yet the VA illogically refuses to acknowledge.

Time is running out for these Vietnam veterans and their families. I remain committed to restoring equity for our veterans as do so many of our colleagues. That is why in the 111th Congress, this exact same bill enjoyed the support of over 260 co-sponsors. I also point out that Vietnam Veterans of America also supports this bill.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support equity for our combat veterans of Vietnam exposed to this toxic and deadly cocktail of herbicides.