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## *House of Representatives*

# RECOGNIZE THE PLIGHT OF SHAD VETERANS: IT'S ABOUT TIME!

**HON. BOB FILNER**

OF CALIFORNIA  
IN THE HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. Speaker, I urge support for H.R. 4259, the "Veterans Right to Know Act", recently introduced by my colleague, Congressman MIKE THOMPSON. This bill requires an investigation into chemical and biological weapons tests, especially those carried out from 1962-1974 on our nation's servicemembers.

In this time of war, it is prudent that we redouble our efforts to ensure that the nation is willing and able to protect our troops deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan. To that end, it is imperative that we learn from the past—and one of the great lessons to be learned is that of Project 112 and SHAD.

Project 112 was a Department of Defense program of weapons testing and SHAD (Shipboard Hazard and Defense) was a part of the larger Project 112. SHAD involved a series of tests that were conducted to determine the vulnerability of U.S. warships to attacks with chemical and biological agents. Although service members were not test subjects, they were on board the ships during the tests.

So far, almost 6000 unknowing military personnel have been identified as having been involved in Project 112, exposed to Vx Nerve Gas, Sarin Nerve Gas, E. coli and other toxins and carcinogens. The illnesses occurring at too early ages among many of these veterans seem to be more than a coincidence.

I want to commend our veterans for their diligence in bringing this matter to the forefront. Once again, it is our veterans who had to advocate on their own behalf to get the government to release information about harmful exposures so they could better understand their health issues and illnesses. The Department of Defense denied the tests up until 2002.

We have learned a lot since 2002 when these tests became public knowledge, but there is still much to learn. That is why this bill, H.R. 4259, is so important. We need an independent effort to diligently pursue all avenues to discover every veteran who was affected by this testing and to provide each one with appropriate treatment and benefits. In addition, we need to ensure that steps are taken to prevent and improve the documentation of potentially harmful exposures during the current wars. The lives of our veterans depend on our diligence.

H.R. 4259 is endorsed by the Vietnam Veterans of America, the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Disabled American Veterans, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, the Military Officers Association of America, the Paralyzed Veterans of America and the Blinded Veterans Association. Won't you join them? Please let Congressman THOMPSON know that you want to co-sponsor H.R. 4259!

gentleman that his concerns have been addressed in this bill. Any mariner who is a resident of Florida may have his or her license or Merchant Mariner Document renewed if their records were in the Coast Guard's Records Office in New Orleans that was flooded.

Similarly, section 4 allows the Coast Guard to temporarily extend the certificate of inspection or certificate of compliance if the vessel is normally inspected by a Coast Guard Marine Safety Office located in Alabama, Mississippi or Louisiana.

Several hundred men and women in the Coast Guard spent so much time responding to Hurricane Katrina that they themselves were not able to use their accumulated leave before the end of the fiscal

year. So this bill in section 5 allows Coast Guard personnel who were involved in this hurricane response to carry over for 90 days instead of the normal 60 days that they were allowed.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, H.R. 4508 expresses a sense of Congress that the men and women serving in the Coast Guard went above and beyond the call of duty when they responded to Hurricane Katrina and thanks them for their continued dedication and service to our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, again, I want to thank Chairman LOBIONDO and his staff for working so closely with our staff to get this out quickly. I urge my colleagues to voice their support for H.R. 4508.