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May 6, 2019

The Honorable Mark Takano  
Chairman, House Committee Veterans’  
Affairs  
B234 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 225-7018

The Honorable Phil Roe  
Ranking Member, House Committee  
Veterans’ Affairs  
102 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 225-5714

Dear Chairman Takano and Ranking Member Roe:

The Fleet Reserve Association is indebted to both of you for your robust leadership and support in the House on behalf of our Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans. We know all too well the suffering that was brought on by this lethal herbicide and its consequences to both the Veteran and caretakers.

However, we do have a major concern in the latest version of HR. 299 which sidelines other defining placements to sway a different course of action. The original intent of Congress in the Agent Orange Act of 1991 as specified and included in the language of the Procopio v. Wilkie court case, was to include all veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam’s territorial seas, and also include veterans who served in the ‘waters offshore’, which would have extended beyond the ‘territorial seas’.

In the current language, HR. 299 restricts in the wording to ‘waters offshore’ rather than ‘territorial seas’. We dread that this would have a negative impact and potentially prevent more of our Sea Service Vietnam Veterans from receiving the entitled benefits from Agent Orange.

We respectfully request that the House Veterans Affairs Committee include the words, **“including the territorial seas of such Republics pursuant to the maximum extent authorized by international law”**, after, **“served in the Republic of Vietnam”**.

The FRA fully endorses the wording contained in S.1195 as its companion bill as a way to move forward. We support all expeditious relief efforts on behalf of our Navy Vietnam Veterans’ benefits earned through their sacrifices during this most unpopular time in our history. Last year’s success in the House, and with regret the actions in the Senate, that we are so close in the provisos of giving back through their sacrifices, along with their caretakers. After many dialogues, provisions, instances, and the recent court decision from Procopio, we are so close and

ask that Congress step-up these needed changes on behalf of these Veterans and say **YES**, rather than further those delays.

I am a Blue Water Navy Veteran, retired Navy Master Chief with over 30 years of naval service. It's time to forge ahead and do what is vital, on behalf of our Vietnam Blue Water Navy Veteran and their family members.

Chairman Takano, and Ranking Member Roe, please schedule and make this happen. Too short of time is at stake for these valued Veterans to ensure sustainability in their remaining days and quality of life. As I have said in many testimonies, 'put a face on this, not a price tag', pass this legislation and ensure that the VA purposefully accelerates the quality care for success. We should, 'strive for progress, not perfection'. Let's set the deadline: Memorial Day, 2019.

Thanking you in advance, I look forward to your continued support and passage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas J. Snee". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "T" and a long, sweeping underline.

Thomas J. Snee, M.Ed  
FORCM (SW), USN, (Ret)  
National Executive Director

TJS:dt