

MEDIA ADVISORY
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**SENATOR GILLIBRAND, REPRESENTATIVE GIBSON TO
ANNOUNCE NEW PUSH TO HELP THOUSANDS OF “BLUE
WATER” VIETNAM VETS HARMED BY AGENT ORANGE
BUT IGNORED BY FEDS DUE TO TECHNICALITY IN THE
LAW**

*Current Law Requires VA To Provide Benefits For Service Members Exposed To Agent Orange On Dry
Ground, But Ignores Vets Off Shore*

*Gillibrand’s Legislation Would Ensure “Blue Water” Vietnam Vets Receive Disability and Health Care
Benefits For Diseases Linked To Agent Orange Exposure*

Albany, NY - On Monday, July 6, at 12:00 PM, at American Legion Post - Joseph E. Zaloga Post 1520, U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and Representative Chris Gibson will announce a new push to pass bipartisan legislation to ensure thousands of Navy veterans known as "Blue Water" vets from the Vietnam War exposed to the powerful toxin Agent Orange will be eligible to receive disability and health care benefits they have earned for diseases linked to Agent Orange exposure.

Gillibrand is rallying support for the *Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2015*, legislation that would clarify existing law so that Blue Water veterans would be fully covered by the VA if they served within the “territorial seas,” offshore of Vietnam. The bill would make it easier for VA to process Vietnam War veterans’ claims for service-connected conditions and alleviate a portion of the VA’s backlog by extending presumptive coverage of Agent Orange benefits to these veterans. Gillibrand introduced the *Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2015* with Senator Steve Daines (R-MT) on March 15, 2015. Representative Gibson is an original cosponsor of the House companion legislation.

During the Vietnam War, the U.S. military sprayed approximately 20 million gallons of Agent Orange in Vietnam to remove jungle foliage. This toxic chemical had devastating effects for millions serving in Vietnam. In 1991, Congress passed a law requiring Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide presumptive coverage to Vietnam veterans with illnesses that the Institute of Medicine has directly linked to Agent Orange exposure. However, in 2002 the VA determined that it would only cover Veterans who could prove that they had orders for “boots on the ground” during the Vietnam War. This exclusion affects thousands of sailors who may have still received significant Agent Orange exposure from receiving VA benefits.