****

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **For Immediate Release:** | **Contact:** [Megan Taylor](mailto:Megan_Taylor@heller.senate.gov) |
| October 2, 2018 | 202-224-6244 |
|  |  |

**Heller Introduces Bipartisan, Bicameral Bill to Expedite VA Coverage for Veterans Exposed to Agent Orange**

**WASHINGTON**  —  U.S. Senators Dean Heller (R-NV) and Sherrod Brown (D-OH) along with Congressmen Charlie Crist (D-FL) and Markwayne Mullin (R-OK) introduced the bipartisan, bicameral Agent Orange Exposure Fairness Act. This legislation requires the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to make a decision whether to list new illnesses that the National Academy of Medicine (NAM) has linked to Agent Orange exposure. Currently, the VA is not required to respond to reports from NAM about diseases that it finds to be associated with Agent Orange exposure. However, this legislation would force the VA to act within 60 days and any additions to the current list of illnesses would automatically provide benefits to veterans exposed to Agent Orange who are suffering from designated conditions. Under the VA’s current process, expanding Agent Orange-related coverage has been delayed for up to three years, which has resulted in veterans being denied benefits.

“I have veterans in my home state of Nevada right now who are suffering from diseases, such as bladder cancer, that the National Academy of Medicine has associated with Agent Orange,” **said Senator Heller.** “For example, Richard from Reno, Nevada, served in 1968 in the Korean DMZ where Agent Orange was used, and today he has bladder cancer. He deserves compensation for his exposure, and the VA’s failure to act on the NAM reports should not stand in the way. This legislation holds the VA accountable by requiring the agency to make a final determination, and I’m proud to join Sen. Brown and our colleagues in the House of Representatives to right this wrong.”

"Vietnam veterans exposed to toxic Agent Orange chemicals should have access to the care and benefits they earned," **said Senator Brown.** "VA should act quickly when presented scientific documentation related to an illness linked to toxic exposure. Our veterans have waited long enough for action."

"When a veteran’s medical condition is determined to be linked to their exposure to Agent Orange, they should not have their benefits tied up in bureaucratic red tape," **said Congressman Crist.** "I urge Congress to take swift action on this bipartisan, bicameral bill to help our Vietnam veterans receive the care and benefits they deserve that for too many have been delayed or denied."  
  
"When it comes to taking care of our veterans, we owe it to them to be proactive rather than reactive," **said Congressman Mullin.**  "The Agent Orange Act of 1991 required the Secretary of the VA recommend new illnesses associated with Agent Orange until the requirement lapsed in 2015. The Agent Orange Exposure Fairness Act simply puts back in place the same recommendation requirements that were in place for 25 years.  I am proud to introduce this bipartisan, bicameral legislation alongside Congressman Crist and Senators Heller and Brown so that our Vietnam veterans continue to receive the highest level of care we can provide."

The Agent Orange Exposure Fairness Act has been endorsed by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW), Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), and Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA).

.

###

[cid:image002.png@01D45A43.5B349B70](http://www.facebook.com/pages/US-Senator-Dean-Heller/325751330177)[cid:image003.png@01D45A43.5B349B70](http://twitter.com/SenDeanHeller)[cid:image004.png@01D45A43.5B349B70](http://www.youtube.com/user/SenDeanHeller)