

## Rolling Thunder® Inc. 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference

### Message Points for Senate and House Office Visits

November 4, 2011

**1. Backlog of VA claims.** Although we are aware of some of the efforts being made to expedite the processing of claims it is obvious that the VA underestimated the number of new hires needed to keep up with returning Iraqi and Afghani vets and new Agent Orange claims resulting from adding three new presumptive diseases. When considering that the VA has established a goal of eliminating the backlog by 2015 it is easy to see that this goal can't be met given the size of the present workforce. This is not acceptable in that the processing of new claims has slowed while the VA juggles its staff between treatment, new claims and the backlog. It seems that the VA has simply not added enough staff to handle new claims and to address the backlog at the same time. Recent experiences in helping young Iraqi and Afghani vets to gain admission to VA Hospitals confirms this as VA employees spoke of staff shortages and lack of beds and waiting lists.

**2. H Res 111.** We currently have 90 co-sponsors in the House which represents 21% of the members of the H.O.R. Our goal is to obtain 300 cosponsors in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress which is roughly 70% of the members. We are not yet tracking the percentage of members signed on among key committees. We have been focusing on key leaders in an effort to bring this to the floor for a vote. This is still very possible in this Congress. We must ask our Congressmen/women that are in office to please cosponsor H Res 111 and to bring it to the floor for a vote. Also, please review the List of those Representatives whom have signed on as cosponsors and those whom have not. Go to the website of the National Alliance of Families (<http://www.nationalalliance.org/>) and click on [H.Res. 111 Call to Action NEW 7/30/11](#). Check their status. We would like to thank those who have signed on and ask those whom have not to sign on now. Most important, we must ask them to push this to the floor for a vote! Furthermore, if your chapter is in the home state of any of the Presidential candidates ask them to go public in their support of H Res 111. We need this to become an issue of the campaign!

**3. HR 812. The Agent Orange Equity Act of 2011 and Blue Water and Blue Sky Veterans.** (26 cosponsors see link below). The Senate version was S.1939, sponsored by Sen. Gellibrand, Kirsten E. [NY]. Unfortunately, S.1939 was not re-introduced in this Congress and we need to request that it be re-introduced. There are 500,000+ veterans affected by this situation. There has been some improvement for some of these veterans as a number of US Navy ships have been added to the existing list of ships that are known to have been exposed. We will have copies of the lists available at the Conference. However, we feel that HR 812 and S1939 will enable all veterans that were exposed to receive the medical help and compensation they deserve. Please thank the Representatives whom have signed on as cosponsors and ask those whom have not signed on to please do so now!

Link for Cosponsors: <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h112-812>

Exposed ships list and link to alphabetized list:

Ships or boats that were part of the **Mobile Riverine Force, Inshore Fire Support (ISF) Division 93** or had **one of the following designations** operated on the inland waterways of Vietnam. Veterans whose military records confirm they were aboard these ships qualify for presumption of herbicide exposure.

During your Vietnam tour, did your ship or boat have one of the following designations?

- LCM (Landing Craft, Mechanized)
- LCU (Landing Craft, Utility)
- LCVP (Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel)
- LST (Landing Ship, Tank)
- PBR (Patrol Boat, River)
- PCF (Patrol Craft, Fast or Swift Boat)
- PG (Patrol Gunboat)
- WAK (Cargo Vessel)
- WHEC (High Endurance Cutter)
- WLB (Buoy Tender)
- WPB (Patrol Boat)
- YFU (Harbor Utility Craft)

## Alphabetized Ship List

If your vessel is **not** included in the Mobile Riverine Force, ISF Division 93 or above designations, check VA's [Alphabetized Ship List](#).

**4. H.R. 2634** Victims of Agent Orange Relief Act of 2011. Sponsored by Bob Filner. To direct the Secretary of State to provide assistance for certain individuals affected by exposure to Agent Orange and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enhance the availability of medical care for descendants of veterans of the Vietnam era, and for other purposes. **This would include Vietnamese Nationals. We do not support this bill!**

**5. H.R. 1980.** 5/5/2011--Introduced. Sponsor: Jon Runyon [R-NJ3] Gold Star Mothers National Monument Act of 2011 - Authorizes the Gold Star Mothers National Monument Foundation to establish a monument in the District of Columbia area, as a unit of the National Park System, to be known as the Gold Star Mothers National Monument . There are currently 53 cosponsors (see attached list) signed on. Please thank those Representatives who have already signed on and ask them to sign on again in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress. Please request all other Congressmen/women to sign on as of Jan. 2011 as cosponsors and to bring this bill to the floor for a vote.

Link for Cosponsors: <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h112-1980>

Yours truly,

Thomas G. Bender  
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