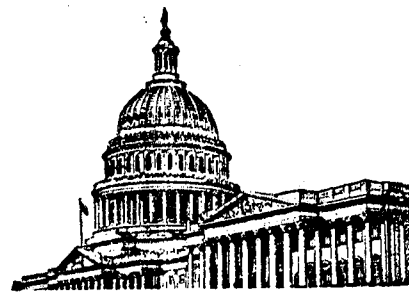


Congressman

LANE
EVANS

17th Congressional District — Illinois

1427 Longworth House Office Building — Washington, D.C. 20515



Telephone: (202) 225-5905

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EVANS INTRODUCES AGENT ORANGE COMPENSATION BILL

Saying that further delays are "unconscionable", Rep. Lane Evans (D-Ill.) today introduced legislation allowing the Veterans Administration (VA) to compensate Vietnam veterans for illnesses linked to Agent Orange exposure.

For years the VA has dismissed veterans' claims of suffering adverse health effects due to exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides used in Vietnam. The deadly contaminant dioxin, present in those herbicides, has been called the most toxic synthetic chemical known to man.

Dioxin is the chemical recently discovered in Times Beach, Missouri. The federal government has advised residents to leave that town, offering to purchase for \$33 million all of its homes and businesses.

"The government would be irresponsible if it compensates the 2,400 people of Times Beach, but refuses to compensate the 2,500 Vietnam veterans eligible under this bill", Evans said.

The amount of dioxin in Agent Orange is twenty times greater than that found at Times Beach, Evans said.

Evans' bill would establish a series of presumptions that certain illnesses and conditions are related to Vietnam service and should therefore be compensated. These illnesses include soft-tissue, lymphatic and stomach cancers, liver abnormalities, nerve damage, severe skin disorders, and others.

"This legislation is not precedent setting as the VA already lists over forty diseases it presumes to be service related", Evans said. "Despite possessing more evidence and knowledge of dioxin's effects on humans than many of the other forty presumptions, the VA continues to deny claims", he said.

"Many Vietnam vets suffering from Agent Orange exposure need help now", Evans said. "Their benefits could be terminated if studies now underway show no correlation between Agent Orange and their ailments", he said.

"For too long the burden of proof concerning the health effects of Agent Orange has rested on Vietnam veterans", Evans said. "Congress must remove that burden and treat our Vietnam vets with the dignity and compassion they deserve", he said.

The Evans bill has been endorsed by the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Vietnam Veterans of America.