

# Veterans For Peace Annual Lobby Days

May 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>, 2015

## Talking Points: Relief for Agent Orange Victims Act

Agent Orange was sprayed over South Vietnam inflicting death, major illnesses and disabilities on more than 3 million Vietnamese and hundreds of thousands of U.S. veterans and Vietnamese Americans. They—and their children and grandchildren—suffer from cancers, immune deficiencies, reproductive illnesses and severe birth defects. People continue to be sickened by exposure to dioxin that remains in the soil in those areas of Vietnam heavily contaminated by the spraying and dumping of Agent Orange.

### **About Agent Orange:**

- Agent Orange is a chemical used by the U.S. Army in the Vietnam War from 1961 to 1971 to remove forest cover, destroy crops, and disrupt agriculture food production. It is called “Agent Orange” because of the orange band that identifies the barrel the chemical came in. There were also Agents Purple, Green, and Pink.
- The chemical have been shown to cause serious skin diseases as well as a vast variety of cancers in the lungs, larynx, and prostate. Other effects include cleft palate, mental disabilities, hernias, and extra fingers and toes. The scariest impact is that the disease and deformities caused by the chemical can span across generations.
- A series of lawsuits came about when people started realizing and experiencing the effects of Agent Orange. Those lawsuits culminated into a class action lawsuit in the 1980’s by U.S. Veterans versus the chemical companies that produced Agent Orange. There were 37 companies involved. The major ones were Dow Chemical, Monsanto (now Solutia), Diamond Shamrock, Hercules, and Uniroyal.
- In 2005, a similar lawsuit was filed by the Vietnamese Victims of Agent Orange against the chemical companies that produced the defoliant/herbicides. However, the same judge from the 1984 trial dismissed the lawsuit, the reason being “that the use of these chemicals during the war, although they were toxic, did not in his opinion fit the definition of ‘chemical warfare’ and therefore did not violate international law.” In 2009, the US Supreme Court once again dismissed the lawsuit of Vietnamese Victims of Agent Orange.
- In 2007, President Bush passed a bill that allocated \$3 million in funding to remedy “dioxin hotspots.” In 2009, President Obama signed a bill to double that aid, ensuring \$6 million to the program.

Our country has a responsibility to heal the wounds of war. Vietnamese people, Vietnamese Americans, and the children of U.S. veterans have yet to receive meaningful help from the U.S. government.

### **We support the H.R. 2114 Victims of Agent Orange Relief Act of 2015, which will:**

- Provide health care and social services for affected Vietnamese,
- Provide medical assistance and disability benefits to affected children of American Vietnam veterans,
- Provide health care for affected Vietnamese Americans and their offspring, and
- Clean up the lands and restore eco-systems contaminated by Agent Orange/dioxin in Vietnam.
- Conduct research into the health effects of Agent Orange in the U.S. and Vietnam.