

## **Expanded Agent Orange Reform Bill Passes House**

The House passed the "Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act" (H.R.299). This bill would clarify that service members serving off the coast of the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam conflict have a presumption for filing disability claims with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for ailments associated with exposure to the Agent Orange herbicide. The presumption of exposure was afforded by the Agent Orange Act of 1991, but was eliminated by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs' regulation in 2001 for those who served offshore. Studies have shown that Agent Orange dioxin made its way into the rivers and harbors and was enriched by the ships' evaporation distillation system, causing significant exposure to those aboard.

The bill has been amended in committee to include certain veterans that served in Korea near the demilitarized zone and in Thailand. FRA believes Congress should recognize these veterans were exposed to Agent Orange herbicide and authorize presumptive status for VA disability claims associated with this exposure