

# Thomas J Laliberte

PO Box 56, North Weymouth, MA 02191

781-331-6968

May 13, 2009

The Honorable Stephen Lynch  
United States House of Representatives  
221 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515-2109

Dear Representative Lynch:

On May 5th the House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Bob Filner (D-CA) announced the introduction of H.R. 2254, a bill to restore equity to all Vietnam veterans that were exposed to Agent Orange. This Bill will amend title 38, of the United States Code, to clarify presumptions relating to the exposure of certain veterans who served in the vicinity of the Republic of Vietnam. Myself, and many other veterans, are relying on the support of our Representatives to also co-sponsor this Bill and to vote it into legislation.

H.R. 2254 will offer parity to Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange while serving at sea. Currently, Blue Water Navy sailors are not eligible for compensation for Agent Orange exposure. Achieving equity of care and benefits for veterans exposed to Agent Orange is important to me because I was diagnosed in August 2006 with multiple myeloma, an uncommon cancer of the blood. This disease is incurable and requires constant monitoring and treatment. The only risk factor I can identify is my exposure to Agent Orange while serving as a US Navy Photographer aboard the USS Constellation in Vietnam. I regularly handled photographic equipment, attached to aircraft, which flew in the spray zones and often landed at bases in Vietnam. Since contracting multiple myeloma, I :

- was also diagnosed with kidney failure due to the multiple myeloma in August, 2006;
- have been unable to work since August 2006;
- approved for SSDI since January, 2007;
- was divorced by my wife in January, 2009;
- am financially unable to rent living space and was taken in by a fellow veteran;
- am still waiting for approval of my VA claim.

Also I have been in contact with the Massachusetts Senate President Therese Murray about a Resolution passed by the Texas Legislature ([resolution \(Bill: SCR 38\)](#) urging the United States Congress to restore the presumption of a service connection for Agent Orange exposure to Navy (and Air Force) vets who served on the inland waterways, territorial waters, and in the airspace of Vietnam. It appears at this time, the Massachusetts Senate is also interested in adopting such a Resolution, as that of Texas, in support of veterans in need of compensation and medical care related to Agent Orange diseases.

Without VA Disability and Pension, many veterans will be unable to support themselves. H.R. 2254 would offer myself, and thousands of veterans like me, the critical support that we need to live with dignity.

On behalf of other Vietnam veterans and myself who are seeking parity, please co-sponsor H.R. 2254 and vote it into legislation.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Laliberte  
Former U.S. Navy Photographer PH3  
USS Constellation CVA64 - Squadron RVAH7