

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 30, 2018

The Honorable Mick Mulvaney
Director
Office of Management and Budget (OMB)
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Mulvaney:

We write to express our concern with the government's delay in recognizing and providing compensation for serious diseases afflicting veterans exposed to Agent Orange.

As you know, during the Vietnam War, approximately twenty million gallons of military herbicides including Agent Orange were sprayed over the Republic of Vietnam, contaminating the land, rivers, harbors, and territorial seas. In 1991, Congress passed the Agent Orange Act (P.L. 102-4) to provide for an independent evaluation by National Academy of Sciences of the scientific evidence regarding the associations between diseases and exposure to dioxin and other chemical compounds in herbicides like Agent Orange. In its most recent biennial report, published in March 2016, the Committee upgraded bladder cancer and other conditions from "inadequate or insufficient" to the category of "limited or suggestive" evidence of an association with Agent Orange exposure.¹


In March, then Secretary David Shulkin was asked about the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) determination for presumptive conditions including bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinson's-like symptoms when he testified before the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. He stated:

"I have transmitted my recommendations to the [White House's] Office of Management and Budget. I did that by November 1st. And we are in the process right now of going through this data. In fact, we met with [OMB officials] on Monday [March 19, 2018]. They have asked for some additional data to be able to work through the process and be able to get financial estimates for this. So, we are committed to working with OMB to get this resolved in the very near future."

Our government has an obligation to help veterans whose exposure to Agent Orange during their service in Vietnam and the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) may have caused or aggravated serious conditions like bladder cancer. We recognize that expanding eligibility for VA benefits requires a thorough review by your office. However, these veterans have waited for decades. That is why we respectfully request that you provide us with an update regarding the status of the OMB's review since these recommendations were transmitted to your office in November.

Sincerely,



Josh Gottheimer
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Gus M. Bilirakis
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

¹ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2016. *Veterans and Agent Orange: Update 2014*. Washington, DC: The National Academies.