

1996 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 64

Requesting the Department of Veterans' Affairs to establish an Agent Orange task force.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 7, 1996

Agreed to by the Senate, March 6, 1996

WHEREAS, the General Assembly of Virginia conducted a study of the effects of Agent Orange on the Commonwealth's Vietnam veterans in 1988; and

WHEREAS, the study subcommittee conducted work sessions and public hearings at the four corners of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, repeatedly, the subcommittee received testimony from packed audiences concerning the various forms of disorders suffered by Vietnam veterans and their families, including, among their children, birth defects, learning disabilities, and cancers and, among the men and women veterans themselves, cancer such as soft tissue sarcoma and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma; neurological and metabolic disorders such as porphyria cutanea tarda, a rare disorder characterized by neurological symptoms, abdominal pain, and sensitivity to light; reduced fertility, miscarriages, and still births; and chloracne, a disfiguring skin disorder caused by exposure to certain chemicals; and

WHEREAS, as one of its recommendations, the subcommittee proposed, and was successful in having approved, enhancement of the duties of the Department of Veterans' Affairs as applied to Vietnam veterans; and

WHEREAS, § 2.1-740 of the Code of Virginia requires the Department, as a result of the subcommittee's efforts, to disseminate literature and information on Agent Orange; establish a mechanism for informing Vietnam veterans about the availability of free screening for exposure to Agent Orange; develop cooperative relationships with other organizations for the purpose of disseminating literature and information on Agent Orange to Vietnam veterans and their families; monitor congressional actions related to Vietnam veterans and exposure to Agent Orange and the developments in class action suits; and join and attend the National Conference of State Agent Orange Programs; and

WHEREAS, in some other states, Agent Orange Commissions have been established to provide a forum for communication, support, and consolidation of efforts for Vietnam veterans; and

WHEREAS, the Department has the duty of assisting veterans and their spouses and children in "matters of rehabilitation and in the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of all lawful claims"; and

WHEREAS, in the exercise of this duty and the responsibilities set forth in § 2.1-740, the Department must facilitate Vietnam veterans in their efforts to organize, communicate, seek redress, and find support; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Department of Veterans' Affairs be requested to establish an Agent Orange task force. The Department shall establish a task force to advise the Board of Veterans' Affairs in the exercise of its statutory responsibilities relating to the dissemination of literature and information on Agent Orange to Vietnam veterans and their families; the establishment of a mechanism for informing Vietnam veterans about the availability of free screening for exposure to Agent Orange; the monitoring of congressional actions related to Vietnam veterans and exposure to Agent Orange and the developments in class action suits; and the participation in the Agent Orange Coordinating Council.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs shall report on its actions pursuant to this resolution to the Governor and the 1997 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

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