

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**



FROM: Supervisor John F. Tavaglione
Supervisor John J. Benoit


SUBMITTAL DATE:
March 6, 2013

SUBJECT: Support for Extension of Benefits for those Veterans Exposed to Agent Orange during Operation Ranch Hand, in Vietnam


RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board of Supervisors directs:

1. That the County Executive Officer direct the county representative in Washington, D.C. to express the Board of Supervisors desire to support a bill to extend benefits for Veterans who have been exposed to Agent Orange; and
2. That the County Executive Officer direct the county representatives in Sacramento to seek and secure a joint resolution of support from the Senate and Assembly in support of continuing federal benefits to Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange. That the joint resolution be conveyed to all members of the Inland Empire delegation in the House of Representatives and our two United States Senators. The Executive Officer shall designate county team members to advocate for the extension of these benefits as he so chooses.

(Continued)



John F. Tavaglione, County Supervisor
Representing the 2nd District



John J. Benoit, County Supervisor
Representing the 4th District

Prev. Agn. Ref.:

District: 2, 4

Agenda Number:

3-66

BACKGROUND: During the Vietnam War, from 1962 through 1971, the United States Armed Forces sprayed 20,000,000 U.S. Gallons of chemical herbicides and defoliants mixed with jet fuel in Vietnam, eastern Laos, and parts of Cambodia during "Operation Ranch Hand" (ORH). The purpose of ORH was to defoliate forested rural lands to deprive guerrillas of cover and to destroy the guerrilla food supply. The United States Air Force reports having flown 7,542 sorties (flights) to disburse Agent Orange. By 1971 fully 12 percent of South Vietnam had been sprayed with Agent Orange and Agent Blue. This resulted in an application of the chemicals 13 times higher than the USDA allocation rate. Some 39,000 square miles of South Vietnam were sprayed or a total surface area five and one half times the size of the County of Riverside. Military personnel serving in Vietnam were told that Agent Orange was harmless. Slowly, our government receives claims from former service members about health side effects. The government essentially placed the burden of proof on veterans and denied claims for benefits. As early as 1993 only 486 victims of Agent Orange were compensated for their disabilities while some 39,419 veterans filed claims. In 1991, the Congress enacted "The Agent Orange Act". During National Association of County meetings in Washington, D.C. from March 2 thru 6, 2013 members of Riverside County Board of Supervisors and the Executive Office discussed the need for extension of benefits with Inland Congressional delegates Paul Cook, Mark Takano, and Raul Ruiz. All three Representatives are members of the Committee on Veterans Affairs. Each has agreed to support and/or author legislation that will extend benefits from veterans whose health has been impacted by Agent Orange. Riverside County is proud of our veterans and is the home to the 7th largest concentration of veterans in the United States of America. Support of this effort ensures our veterans receive the benefits needed to cope with the dreadful impacts of Agent Orange.