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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

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TONY McCLAIN, STAFF DIRECTOR

October 31, 2019

The Honorable Mick Mulvaney  
Director of Office of Management and Budget  
725 17<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Mulvaney,

We write today to insist that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) stop blocking the inclusion of Bladder Cancer, Hypothyroidism, Parkinsonism, and Hypertension on the Department of Veterans Affairs' presumptive list as it relates to Agent Orange exposure. The time is long overdue to end the wait for more than 80,000 frustrated and desperate veterans who are currently living with and dying because of these health conditions.

As we are sure you know, the National Academies of Medicine (NAM) issued the *Veterans and Agent Orange Update 2014* on March 10, 2016. This report listed hypothyroidism and bladder cancer as having "limited or suggestive evidence of an association" to Agent Orange exposure. In addition, this report broadened the definition of Parkinson's disease, which also was in the "limited or suggestive evidence of an association" category, to include Parkinson-like symptoms or Parkinsonism. NAM issued the *Veterans and Agent Orange Update 11* on November 15, 2018. This report moved hypertension from the "limited or suggestive evidence of an association" category to the "sufficient evidence of an association" category. That means there is now even more scientific evidence that Agent Orange causes hypertension in Vietnam Veterans.

We are frustrated that previous letters addressed directly to you on this specific topic have gone unanswered. And only through a Freedom of Information Act request, did Congress learn that OMB "lacks confidence" in NAM's scientific evidence and has concerns with the budgetary effects of extending these presumptions. Frankly, you need to do your job. No more excuses. Stop turning your backs on thousands of Vietnam-era veterans across the country who are suffering—and dying—from significant health conditions directly associated with their service to our nation and their exposure to toxic herbicides. Stop denying the overwhelming scientific evidence provided to you by countless veterans and medical experts—the same evidence cited by the previous VA Secretary, who attempted to add these medical conditions to the presumptive list more than two years ago. These veterans and their families have already sacrificed a great deal. They should not be forced to wait one minute longer.

We look forward to your prompt response, which needs to include a timeline for when these conditions will be added to the presumptive list for Agent Orange exposure.

Sincerely,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jon Tester  
United States Senator

  
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Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator

  
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Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator

  
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Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator