The Honorable James M. Inhofe  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services  
Russell Senate Building, Room 228  
Washington, DC  20510

The Honorable Jack Reed  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services  
Russell Senate Building, Room 228  
Washington, DC  20510

The Honorable Adam Smith  
Chairman  
House Armed Services Committee  
2216 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC  20510

The Honorable Mac Thornberry  
Ranking Member  
House Armed Services Committee  
2216 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC  20510

Dear Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed, Chairman Smith, and Ranking Member Thornberry:

We write to express our support for inclusion of Senate Amendment 1972 in the final conference agreement for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (NDAA). This critical provision would expand the Department of Veterans Affairs’ list of medical conditions associated with Agent Orange exposure to include Bladder Cancer, Hypothyroidism, and Parkinsonism. Tens of thousands of Vietnam veterans suffer from these three conditions due to their military service, yet these veterans continue to be denied the care and benefits they have earned and desperately need.

This bipartisan amendment – which passed the Senate with 94 votes - provides a presumption of service-connection for Bladder Cancer, Hypothyroidism, and Parkinsonism for veterans exposed to certain herbicide agents while serving in Vietnam. The National Academy of Medicine (NAM) reported on the link between these three conditions and exposure to Agent Orange in 2016, and NAM reports continue to be the standard for scientific evidence of association since the Agent Orange Act of 1991. Thirty veterans’ advocacy groups and organizations have already sent multiple letters of support to Congressional leadership on behalf of this amendment.
It is time for Congress to acknowledge the overwhelming scientific evidence put forth by veterans, scientists and medical experts, and to end the wait for the more than 34,000 frustrated and desperate veterans living with and dying from these health conditions. Inclusion of this legislation in the conference agreement for the Fiscal Year 2021 NDAA would be consistent with science and historic precedent, and is simply the right thing to do for these veterans and their families.

Sincerely,

Jon Tester
United States Senator

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

Patrick Leahy
United States Senator

Patty Murray
United States Senator

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

Susan Collins
United States Senator

M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator

Todd Young
United States Senator
Joe Manchin III  
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

Tom Udall  
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator

Steve Daines  
United States Senator

Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator

Jacky Rosen  
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator

Bob Menendez  
United States Senator

/s/ Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

/s/ Martin Heinrich
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

/s/ Tim Kaine
Tim Kaine
United States Senator

/s/ Thomas R. Carper
Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Tina Smith
United States Senator

Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Mark R. Warner
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator