

NEW JERSEY STATE COUNCIL
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AGENT ORANGE/DIOXIN COMMITTEE
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SUMMARY PRESENTATION TO THE
UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REASSESSMENT OF DIOXIN PUBLIC HEARINGS
DECEMBER 9, 1994

The United States Environmental Protection Agency, in its Reassessment of Dioxin, has informed the American people of the dangers of Dioxin. We, as Vietnam Veterans exposed to the Dioxin in Agent Orange, knew all along that the higher incidences of cancers and other illnesses contracted by many of us were not just random occurrences.

The National Academy of Sciences and the Department of Veterans Affairs Task Force Agent Orange have determined that numerous cancers, skin and liver disorders are directly associated to exposure, in Vietnam, of Dioxin contaminated herbicides. Ongoing reviews by the National Academy of Sciences might associate additional nerve and immune disorders.

Further proof that these illnesses were caused by exposure to Agent Orange/Dioxin is now on your doorstep. Increased research will inevitably also bring forward the correlation between birth defects in our children and our exposure to Dioxin. This Reassessment, in addition to other studies conducted around the world can be the driving force towards the total elimination of Dioxin.

In New Jersey, we are experiencing numerous environmental problems caused by Dioxin contamination. The now abandoned Diamond Shamrock Agent Orange production facility in Newark is a Federal Superfund site. During a tour of that site, I was told by the guide that the contaminated buildings, soil and barrels of herbicide stored there would most likely be kept there. There is no place that these

contaminated materials could be sent. A concrete mountain would probably be built to enclose the contamination. We were pleased that Dr. Farland attended a meeting of the Civic Committee overseeing the clean-up of the site.

We are also going through a nasty battle relating to the dumping of Dioxin contaminated sediments from Ports Newark and Elizabeth into the ocean. New Jersey's economy could suffer substantial harm if the harbors are not dredged of the silt and sediments that have accumulated over the years. Yet we cannot allow this Dioxin contaminated material to be dumped into the ocean. It is a terrible problem for both government, industry and environmentalists. However, our position is that our health and the health of our children and grandchildren are of paramount importance and cannot be compromised by Dioxin contamination of our oceans.

The Dredged Materials Management Forums, in which we have participated, have offered alternatives to ocean dumping.

We hope that this Reassessment will provide sufficient evidence of Dioxin's toxicity to EPA's Region II in order to dissuade their insistence on ocean dumping.

This is our third appearance at these Public Hearings. Our organization strongly urges the scientists and researchers conducting this Reassessment of Dioxin not to wilt in their pursuit of the truth about Dioxin. We know that the Risk Managers and Regulators will hound you at every turn, that the Chemical and Paper companies will use every legal and monetary means to try and negate the strong correlation you have made between Dioxin and illnesses. Hold fast and strong and the bitter legacy of Dioxin contamination might eventually be ended.

We thank you for this opportunity to speak.

For the New Jersey State Council
Vietnam Veterans of America



Michael Eckstein, Committee Chair
Agent Orange/Dioxin Committee
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