

The American Legion

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For God and Country

OFFICE OF THE
NATIONAL COMMANDER

August 28, 1990

Handwritten initials

The Honorable Edward J. Derwinski
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Delegates to last year's American Legion National Convention voted unanimously to support a resolution that called on you to expand the Department's Environmental Hazards Committee so that veterans would be better represented. We are still waiting.

Your efforts on behalf of Vietnam veterans are commendable. The granting of benefits to those suffering from non-Hodgkins Lymphoma and soft tissue sarcomas will help heal the wounds of veterans who thought that the country they served had forgotten them. At the same time you were taking those important steps, an independent panel of scientists reviewed existing literature on the effects of dioxin, and listed a series of diseases and conditions that meet the VA guidelines for dioxin-related problems. Your recently appointed representative to the Environmental Hazards Committee, Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, conducted his own research and reached the same conclusion.

America's veterans and others who monitor the treatment our veterans receive have concluded that the EHC is either unwilling or unable to conduct the most basic review of scientific research. EHC high-handedly rejected Admiral Zumwalt's findings -- findings that have been confirmed not only by the scientists on the independent task force, but also by dozens of others who have reviewed the existing material.

Your representatives are claiming that our lawsuit is impinging on the progress of the EHC but you are well aware that nothing could be further from the truth. As you know, this kind of review is what the EHC is charged to conduct. The people speaking for you are not delivering the message you seem to want to bring. This nation's veterans will soon lose patience with the government and the Department of Veterans Affairs if they don't see progress soon.

Sincerely,

MILES S. EPLING
National Commander