

Joe Cole,

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# Letters

## Agent Orange

For the past eight years, Bernie Newsom, of Cooma, New South Wales, Australia, has been researching the health effects of Agent Orange and other herbicides, pesticides, medications, and other environmental hazards which the Vietnam veterans were subjected to without their knowledge or consent during the Vietnam War. Newsom is the only living Vietnam veteran in the world recognized as being "totally and permanently disabled," with disabilities including toxic chemical poisoning while serving in Vietnam.

I can carefully understand his frustrations anxieties, anger, pain and his tireless pursuit of final justice for all Vietnam veterans and their families. What is extremely difficult for me, as a Vietnam veteran, is the obvious dereliction of duty that our elected congressional officials are currently employing in an effort to deny Newsom an opportunity to present documented evidence to the Congress of the United States Veterans Affairs Committee Hearings dealing with the Agent Orange issue.

On 12 May 1988, the United States Senate held hearings to consider S. 1692 & S. 1787 as well as Agent Orange oversight issues. Mr. Newsom had been attempting for nearly two years to be allowed to present evidence of seriously flawed health studies and the criminal actions which created the Agent Orange controversy. Of the more than 20 speakers presenting evidence in the Senate hearings of 12 May 1988 not one presented evidence on the oversight issue. Why has Mr. Newsom been denied the right to present documented testimony in these hearings? Hundreds of written requests were made on his behalf by veterans and citizens alike. Although the evidence which he possesses presents some serious policy practices, is this a valid reason to deny congressional access to a disabled veteran, who works with thousands of other veterans worldwide, who simply seek some honest answers?

Laws which are currently established (96-151, 97-72, 98-542 etc.) far better represent and assist Vietnam veterans than either of the proposals now before the Congress. When will Congress act to enforce these laws? Or are we now living with laws which only pertain when the Congress or President of the United States deems them to be appropriate? Currently, this certainly appears to be the trend (i.e. "Iran/Contra Gate").

Congressional hearings scheduled for 8 June 1988 did not address the oversight issues. WHY???---Larry Pesacreta, Lacey, Wa. \*

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Agent Orange Petition

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