



**E. R. ZUMWALT, JR.**  
ADMIRAL, U.S. NAVY (RET.)

September 25, 1996

The Honorable Alan K. Simpson  
Chairman, Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I have always admired and respected you. I still do.

I want, however, to be straight with you regarding your recent remarks concerning the decision by Congress to authorize compensation for the children of Vietnam veterans who are afflicted with spina bifida.

I write on the assumption that you were quoted accurately which we both know is not always the case.

Your remarks suggest to me that you felt that the outcome was the result of less than thorough and careful consideration. I wanted to call your attention to the fact that Congress deliberated fully on the disestablishment of the Committee on Environmental Health Hazards, which to my personal knowledge as a member of that committee, engaged in grossly flawed scientific reviews, and replaced it with the assignment of that Committee's former mission to the National Academy of Sciences (NAS). The NAS contracted with the respected Institute of Medicine (IOM) to report every two years on the state of the science with regard to Agent Orange/dioxin studies.

The weight of evidence as more scientific studies have been done has shifted from neutral to the point where it was clear that the defect of spina bifida met the requirements of the statute, i.e, that it was as likely as not that the now documented elevation in the rate of the spinal defects in the children of Vietnam veterans, when compared to a similar control group, made that particular defect fit the requirements of law.

I submit this for your careful consideration since I know you to be the fair-minded man that you are.

Respectfully,

E. R. Zumwalt, Jr.  
Admiral, USN (Ret.)  
Chairman, Agent Orange Coordinating Council

bcc: Agent Orange Coordinating Council