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## Agent Orange resolution passes Senate committee

Matthew Waller

### Resolution seeks coverage for civilians

A resolution asking the federal government to recognize the affect of the illness-inducing chemical Agent Orange on civilian workers and veterans who were not on the ground in the Vietnam War received unanimous approval in a Senate committee Wednesday evening.

The SCR 17 resolution from state Sen. Juan “Chuy” Hinojosa, D-McAllen, asks the U.S. Congress to broaden recognition of effects of the herbicide called Agent Orange to veterans on the inland waterways, in the territorial waters and in the airspace of Vietnam, and to civilians exposed at workplaces.

Steve Maher has fought to have the connection recognized since the death of his father, who serviced Vietnam War helicopters at the Corpus Christi Army Depot, Maher was expected to testify but did not and couldn't be reached for comment after the hearing.

Robert Floyd, chairman of the Texas Capitol Vietnam Veterans Monument committee, testified and said he didn't know whether his fight with cancer and the death of one of his children was connected to exposure to Agent Orange.

Still, he said the chemical “has left a terrible legacy.”

The U.S. military used Agent Orange in Vietnam to remove forest cover and kill enemy crops.

The herbicide contained a chemical linked to illnesses that have injured thousands of veterans, a bill analysis from Hinojosa states.

In 1991, the U.S. Congress passed the Agent Orange Act, which the analysis states gives “access to appropriate disability compensation and medical care for Vietnam veterans” whose health was harmed by the chemicals.

Veterans don't qualify unless they were “boots on the ground” personnel in the country, making it impossible for countless Navy and Air Force veterans to pursue their claims for benefits, the analysis states.

“Agent Orange, of course, did not discriminate between soldiers on the ground and sailors or airmen on shore or in the airspace,” Sen. Brian Birdwell, R-Granbury, said while laying out the resolution for Hinojosa.

Hinojosa argues that personnel on Vietnamese water and the South China Sea also were exposed.

“When the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention studied specific cancers among Vietnam veterans, it found a higher risk of cancer among United States veterans,” his analysis states.

The resolution will go to the Senate and later the Texas House.

[Source](#)