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H.R. 1494, the Blue Water Navy Ship Accountability Act One-Pager

H.R. 1494, the Blue Water Navy Ship Accountability Act would direct the Joint Services Records Research Center (JSRRC) to do a comprehensive search to determine which ships are eligible for coverage under current law for presumptive coverage for exposure to Agent Orange.

Support: The bill enjoys the support of major veterans organizations such as the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Military Officers Association of America, the Military Coalition, the Vietnam Veterans Association, American Veterans, the Association of the U.S. Navy, Military-Veterans Advocacy Inc., and the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Association.

Background:

The Department of Veterans Affairs maintains a list of U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships that operated in Vietnam. Evidence confirmed through military records must show that the Veteran was aboard one of these ships in order to receive benefits. The list is updated periodically with additional ships based on receipt of new evidence. When a Veteran files an Agent Orange exposure-related claim, the regional office forwards a request for research to the Department of Defense and JSRRC.

Why this legislation is needed:

Under current law, Blue Water Navy Veterans who did not set foot in Vietnam or serve aboard ships that operated on the inland waterways of Vietnam between January 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975 must show on a factual basis that they were exposed to herbicides during military service in order to receive disability compensation for diseases related to Agent Orange exposure. These claims are decided on a case-by-case basis.

H.R. 1494 would direct the JSRRC to do a comprehensive search to determine which ships are eligible for coverage under current law. This would help with claims Veterans are making when they are sick or, in some cases, have died and claims are made by their surviving families.

The legislation:

1. **Suspense Date:** Requires that review of ships be completed within one year of passage of the bill.
2. **Dates of operation:** Determine if such ships operated within the territorial waters of Vietnam any time between January 9, 1962, and ending on 13 May 7, 1975. For each such ship that so operated, determine the date or dates when the ship so operated.
3. **Location of operation:** Find the distance from the shore of the location where the ship operated that was the closest proximity to shore.
4. **Reporting requirement:** The information obtained in this review will be reported to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Cost: CBO has indicated that there would be **no score** associated with this bill.