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Rep. Gibson's New Bill Cites Agent Orange

Would help Vietnam veterans



U.S. Rep. Chris Gibson was in Kingston Monday to discuss several bills he is supporting to help veterans.
STEVE BORLAND/Times Herald-Record

By [Michael Randall](#)

Times Herald-Record

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KINGSTON — U.S. Rep. Chris Gibson updated local veterans on efforts in Congress to help them during a meeting Monday at his district office.

Those efforts include a bill he's introduced, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act.

The legislation would grant presumptive Agent Orange exposure status to U.S. service members — primarily those serving in the Navy — who served in the so-called territorial waters, up to 12 miles off the shore in Vietnam.

"We had sailors who served just off the shore ... but they don't get presumed coverage," Gibson said. "That's not right."

Agent Orange, used as a defoliant by the United States in Vietnam, has been linked to cancer and various nerve, respiratory and digestive disorders, among other ailments. Those service persons with presumed exposure are entitled to certain health benefits.

Gibson said his measure is "gaining momentum," with 126 co-sponsors when it was introduced in the last session of Congress, and 50 already signed on for this go-round.

Among the legislation that did pass in the previous Congress, Gibson touted the VOW to Hire Heroes Act. (VOW stands for Veterans Opportunity to Work.)

Gibson said the act gives tax credits to small businesses that hire veterans, and also offers job retraining assistance for up to 100,000 unemployed veterans.

It also helps link veterans to employers in the field in which they are retrained.

Gibson, who served 24 years in the U.S. Army, is a member of the House Armed Services Committee. He said his office pursues a policy of "aggressive advocacy for veterans." He represents New York's 19th Congressional District, which includes all of Sullivan and Ulster counties.

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