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Senators seek inclusion of Guam in Agent Orange bill



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Democratic senators are seeking the inclusion of civilian employees stationed in Guam during the Vietnam conflict in a congressional bill that provides compensation to those suffering from illnesses and disabilities as a result of their exposure to Agent Orange.

Resolution 95, introduced by Sens. Tina Muna Barnes, D-Mangilao, Judi Won Pat, D-Malojloj, and Ben Pangelinan, D-Barrigada, urges Congresswoman Madeleine Bordallo to seek amendment to HR 972, also known as the "Civilian Agent Orange Act," to include Guam in the compensation program.

HR 972 establishes the Agent Orange Illness Compensation Fund and fixes the compensation amount at \$100,000, payable either to the employee or his or her eligible survivor.

Proponents of Resolution 95 cited at least two cases that acknowledged the presence of Agent Orange and other toxic defoliants on Guam.

They were referring to the cases filed by Air Force veteran Robert Burgett and another unidentified airman, whose claims for benefits were both granted by the Board of the Veterans' Appeals after it was determined that their disabilities and illnesses resulted from their exposure to Agent Orange when they were stationed at Andersen Air Force Base.

"Existing federal legislation provides compensation for those in the military service who suffered disability or death because of exposure to Agent Orange, but the law does not cover civilian employees, some of who have also been exposed," the resolution reads.

"Because it has already been determined that members of the armed forces during the Vietnam war era were exposed to Agent Orange while stationed in Guam and they are being compensated for their disability or death," the resolution adds, "it is only fair and just that the civilian employees of the federal government physically present in Guam be included in HR 972 so that they can be compensated if there is service connection for illness or death due to herbicide exposure."

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