

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 27, 2019

The Honorable Mick Mulvaney  
Director of the Office of Management and Budget  
725 17th St NW  
Washington, DC 20503

The Honorable Robert Wilkie  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20571

Dear Director Mulvaney and Secretary Wilkie:

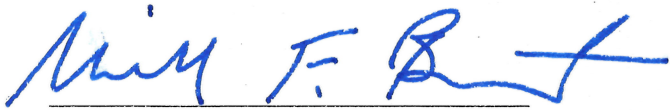
We write to express our serious concern regarding delays for veterans who are suffering from illnesses related to their exposure to Agent Orange. The Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) decision to exclude bladder cancer, hypertension, Parkinsonism, and hypothyroidism as diseases linked to Agent Orange is frustrating and unfair. This delay denies approximately 83,000 veterans, many from Colorado and Pennsylvania, faster access to disability compensation and health benefits.

As you know, Congress has mandated that the National Academies of Medicine (NAM) publish updated reports that comprehensively evaluate scientific and medical information about the health effects of exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides used during the Vietnam War. The 2016 NAM report *Veterans and Agent Orange Update 2014* states, "sufficient evidence of an association between exposure to at least one of the chemicals of interest and hypertension." This report also determined there is "limited and suggestive evidence" that offers a link between Agent Orange exposure and bladder cancer and hypothyroidism. By refusing to include these illnesses on the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) list of Agent Orange presumptive benefits, OMB is acting in direct opposition to the NAM's analysis of peer-reviewed reports that suggest otherwise. We encourage you to acknowledge the scientific based evidence and the recommendation of the previous VA Secretary David Shulkin, and designate these conditions to the presumptive list for Agent Orange exposure.

We are also concerned by the delay in the implementation of the *Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act*, signed into law on June 25, which expands Agent Orange benefits to veterans who served aboard ships offshore and in the harbors of Vietnam. These veterans and their families have waited long enough for access to the benefits for which they are eligible and desperately need. The administration should prioritize and process these claims as soon as possible.

Our nation must live up to the promises it has made to the men and women who have sacrificed much by serving in uniform. Thank you and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey Jr.  
United States Senator