

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

March 30, 2006

The Honorable R. James Nicholson  
Secretary  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The Veterans and Agent Orange Update 2004 stated "a body of literature has accumulated suggesting an association between the compounds of interest [2,4-D, 2,4,5-T, TCDD, picloram, or cacodylic acid] and peripheral neuropathy." However, the Institute of Medicine's Committee to Review the Health Effects in Vietnam Veterans of Exposure to Herbicides concluded that there was inadequate or insufficient evidence to determine an association between exposure to herbicides and delayed or persistent peripheral neuropathy.

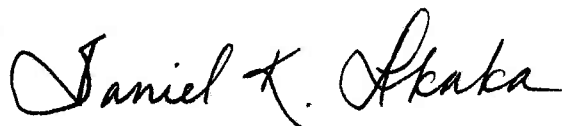
We are requesting that, as the Department prepares its research agenda, you seriously consider further studies to clarify the relationship between exposure to the compounds of interest and subsequent manifestation of chronic peripheral neuropathy. Where there are studies supporting a finding of association, but such studies do not provide a definitive answer under criteria applied by the scientific community, we believe that it is the VA's responsibility to advance the research agenda.

Please advise our respective committees if you will undertake further research in this area, your planned course of action, and expected completion date for such research.

Sincerely,



LANE EVANS  
Ranking Democratic Member  
Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
U.S. House of Representatives



DANIEL K. AKAKA  
Ranking Democratic Member  
Committee on Veterans Affairs  
U.S. Senate