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Referred: State Affairs

1 IN THE HOUSE

BY RINGSTAD

2

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 64

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IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

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THIRTEENTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

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Relating to disability and death allow-

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ances for veterans exposed to Agent

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Orange or nuclear radiation while serv-

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ing in the United States Armed Forces.

9 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

10 WHEREAS between 1961 and 1971, approximately 52 million pounds of an  
11 herbicide commonly known as Agent Orange were disseminated in South  
12 Vietnam; and

13 WHEREAS one of the herbicides used to formulate Agent Orange contained  
14 the contaminant dioxin, a compound formed during the production processes  
15 and known to be highly toxic to certain animal species; and

16 WHEREAS veterans of the Vietnam War who believe they have been exposed  
17 to Agent Orange have complained of a variety of illnesses and birth defects  
18 in their children for which they seek medical treatment and disability  
19 compensation; and

20 WHEREAS scientific studies on the effects of Agent Orange are still in  
21 progress and are not expected to be completed for several years or longer;  
22 and

23 WHEREAS many veterans of the Vietnam War have not had Agent Orange  
24 examinations; and

25 WHEREAS, of those veterans who have had the examinations and have been  
26 found by the Veterans' Administration to have claims supported by a  
27 diagnosed disability, most have had their claims denied for not being  
28 service-connected; and

29 WHEREAS these circumstances are causing great concern among Vietnam

1 veterans and their families about the long-term health effects that may  
2 have been caused by the veterans' exposure to Agent Orange while serving in  
3 the Armed Forces in Southeast Asia; and

4 WHEREAS, beginning in 1945 and continuing until 1963, the United  
5 States government exploded approximately 235 nuclear devices in the  
6 atmosphere over the southwestern United States and over the Pacific Ocean;  
7 and

8 WHEREAS an estimated 222,000 military personnel participated in those  
9 tests but there is very little information about the health effects on  
10 those veterans who were exposed to radiation during the weapons test pro-  
11 gram; and

12 WHEREAS additional troops serving in the occupation forces in Japan  
13 after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 were exposed to  
14 radiation that may not have been documented accurately with proper exposure  
15 devices or methodologies; and

16 WHEREAS there is limited scientific understanding of the relationship  
17 between exposure to low dosages of radiation and subsequent health  
18 problems, despite numerous studies since 1902; and

19 WHEREAS the troops exposed to radiation during service in the Armed  
20 Forces of the United States, commonly known as Atomic Veterans, have been  
21 unable to establish the connection that the Veterans' Administration re-  
22 quires to be established between their health problems and their service,  
23 despite some scientific evidence that their health problems probably stem  
24 from their exposure to radiation; and

25 WHEREAS the Atomic Veterans, being unable to establish that their  
26 health problems are service-connected, are being denied disability and  
27 death allowances based on those problems; and

28 WHEREAS the United States House of Representatives has recently passed  
29 H.R. 1961, to provide disability and death allowances to veterans and the

1 survivors of the veterans who served in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam  
2 War and suffer from diseases that may be attributable to exposure to Agent  
3 Orange, and to veterans and the survivors of the veterans who participated  
4 in atomic tests or the occupation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and suffer from  
5 diseases that may be attributable to radiation;

6 BE IT RESOLVED by the Alaska State Legislature that the passage of  
7 H.R. 1961, the Vietnam Veterans Agent Orange Relief Act, by the United  
8 States House of Representatives is strongly supported; and be it

9 FURTHER RESOLVED that the United States Senate is respectfully urged  
10 to approve the legislation as well.

11 COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable George Bush,  
12 Vice-President of the United States and President of the U.S. Senate; the  
13 Honorable Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr., Speaker of the U.S. House of Representa-  
14 tives; and to the Honorable Ted Stevens and the Honorable Frank Murkowski,  
15 U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of  
16 the Alaska delegation in Congress.