

House Bill HJR 202

Testimony of Jerry Murray, a private citizen of Salem, Oregon

Representing US Navy Seabee Team 0417

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My name is Jerry Murray. I reside in Salem. I was the Officer-in-Charge of Seabee Team 0417, which served in Xuan Loc, Vietnam from 1971-1972.

Oregon veterans and their families desperately need this bill adopted. Oregon has so many veterans, spouses and families that are not aware of their VA benefits or they do not know how to cut through all the Federal Veterans Administration red tape and bureaucracy.

My testimony is not about broad statistics about veterans and their disabilities. My testimony is a personal story about Seabee Team 0417 and the thirteen men who served on it.

I was drafted into the US military near the end of the Vietnam War. After being drafted, I immediately joined the US Navy Seabees. After basic training I was assigned to be on Seabee Team 0417 and sent to Vietnam. Our mission included resettling refugees and helping the very poor in the Vietnam Central Highlands. The team included 13 men, who were some of the best construction and medical personnel in the US Navy. We were also capable of defending ourselves in hostile rural areas, and we experienced enemy combat action.

We successfully completed our mission in Vietnam and were honorably thanked by the government of Vietnam and by the Vietnamese people we served. When we returned to the U.S., the team was basically dumped on U.S. soil. We received no welcome home from the US military nor from US citizens. We were burned out and felt alone and abandoned by our nation.

I lost track of the other members on the team for almost 40 years. Four year ago our team met for the first time as civilians. We have had annual reunions ever since. Of those 8 still alive on the 13 man team, six have serious military-related disabilities. Two of us have minor disabilities from the war.