



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

## New York State Silver Rose Certificate Newest Military Award Available to Veterans

CATHARINE YOUNG November 9, 2018

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ALBANY – Senator Catharine M. Young (R,C,I – 57<sup>th</sup> District) announced today that Governor Cuomo has signed legislation she authored to establish a new state military certificate to honor the sacrifices of veterans who have suffered from the effects of tactical herbicides such as Agent Orange. The New York State Silver Rose Certificate will be available to current state residents or individuals who were state residents during the period when their exposure occurred.

“The risks and hardships of wartime service do not always end when a tour of duty is complete. No group of veterans understands this better than those who served in Vietnam and were exposed to highly toxic, tactical herbicides such as Agent Orange. Tragically, many of these courageous veterans have suffered from debilitating and even deadly health problems in the war’s aftermath, ranging from cancers to nervous system, respiratory and heart disorders,” said Senator Young.

“I took up this cause after speaking with many Vietnam veterans in my district who shared the devastating health challenges they’ve battled as a result of their exposure to toxic herbicides. In some cases, it caused catastrophic illnesses that eventually took their lives. For others, it caused chronic conditions that impaired their ability to work and enjoy a quality of

life. The New York State Silver Rose Certificate is an acknowledgement of their enormous sacrifices and a symbol of awareness of the dangers of Agent Orange.”

Veterans who have suffered from the effects of tactical herbicides such as Agent Orange would be eligible to receive a New York State Silver Rose Veterans’ Service Certificate under the new law. The designation may also be awarded posthumously. The measure authorizes the New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs to select the color and design of the honor.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy authorized "Operation Ranch Hand," the code name for the United States Air Force's herbicide program in Vietnam. A number of herbicidal agents were used, including, most infamously, Agent Orange. Approximately 20 million gallons of the herbicide were used to help U.S. forces by defoliating forest areas that concealed the enemy and destroying the crops that provided their food. As many as **2.6 million U.S. service members** were exposed to the chemical.

Agent Orange has been linked to increased rates of cancer, including Hodgkin's and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, throat, prostate, lung, colon, and liver cancer, as well as Ischemic Heart Disease and acute/chronic leukemia. The Department of Veterans Affairs recognizes over 40 cancers and sicknesses, including diabetes, as Agent Orange related and “service connected.”

Senator Young concluded by saying that, “more than 58,000 Americans lost their lives in the Vietnam War. Yet, the real number of casualties is far higher when you factor in each veteran who has fought and died from an Agent Orange related illness. The Silver Rose Certificate is an acknowledgement of their suffering and sacrifice and a reminder of how much we owe those who have put their lives on the line for us.”

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