

Rebecca Lucas

My husband served in Vietnam, April 1967 to April 1968 during the peak usage of Agent Orange. He was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in April 1987. He has dealt with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma for 36 years.

Monsanto and Dow Chemical were two of the primary producers of Agent Orange. Agent Orange was used as a defoliant to help the war effort. In addition to creating a toxic nightmare for the country of Vietnam, 1.5 million allied service persons who were stationed in Vietnam suffered from the toxic effects of Agent Orange.

Prior to the production of Agent Orange, dioxin was known to be extremely toxic and it had documented adverse effects on humans. Dioxin is not an intended part of the manufactured herbicide but is an undesired byproduct of the manufacturing process. If care is taken during manufacturing the amount of dioxin is very low. Production of the chemicals used in Agent Orange was rushed by increasing the heat to maximize profits for Monsanto and Dow. This heat increased the amount of dioxin dramatically. The level of dioxin in Agent Orange was many times greater than the EPA standard of acceptable level of dioxin.

A judicial ruling in 1919, *Dodge v Ford Motor Co.* established "Stockholder Primacy". Stating, "a business is organized and carries on primarily for the profit of shareholders." This decision allowed a company to maximize profit by producing and distributing a herbicide with levels of dioxin above the EPA standard. They are after all doing so for their shareholder's profit. The harm it caused the common man, and our earth was not factored in. The corporate decision to maximize profit and make Agent Orange with unimaginable levels of toxicity created a nightmare for millions of people.

In 2010, the supreme court decided that corporations had the same rights as people in Citizens United v FEC, further crippling our democracy. Because corporations are granted the right of free speech, they are not obligated to disclose information that might make people reluctant to buy their product. Now they can operate solely for profit and not inform citizens the truth about potential harm their product might cause.

If we amend our US Constitution to say 1) corporations are not people entitled to constitutional rights but are legal constructs that should be required to serve the common good and 2) money is not speech and therefore it can be regulated to prevent those with more wealth from having a louder voice then it is possible for us to be a more democratic society with a government of, for and by the people, all the people. MN needs to step up and affirm that they will support this effort to amend our constitution.