

Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act

There have been more than 2 million veterans who are vulnerable to toxins in their areas of operations. However, in March 2022, the US House of Representatives moved a step further in enacting the Honoring our Pact Act to ensure all this population is under better health care. Even if the bill has taken along to be passed, at least there seems to be light ahead of the tunnel.

Until roughly 2010, burn pits were routinely used to dispose of rubbish, including household garbage, munitions, hazardous materials, and chemical substances, at military facilities throughout Iraq and Afghanistan.

According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, these huge open-air fire pits, frequently operated on or near military facilities, discharged harmful pollutants into the air that may have triggered both short- and long-term health problems. According to a 2020 member survey conducted by the advocacy organization Iraq and Afghanistan Vets of America, 86% of participants were subjected to burn pits or other poisons.

Now, having the bill passed through the House, it awaits the senate to pass before it becomes a law.

If the bill goes through the Senate, it will also be a win for President Joe Biden, who has been pushing its implementation, considering he is a victim of the toxins. Beau, the son of President Biden, served as a veteran during the Iraq war, where he later suffered from brain cancer. It is believed that the cause of the brain cancer might have emerged from the toxin exposure during the war. While addressing the state of the union, President Biden urged congress to pass the bill.

As one of its top focuses, the bill will extend medical services and coverage to ex-military officers exposed to these toxins. Also, the bill adds 23 conditions related to burn pits and toxins exposure to the list of illnesses that have resulted from this condition. Therefore, any military office suffering from either of these conditions will not have to prove their exposure to toxic substances.

The bill calls for improvements in VA medical centres, processing of the claims, the VA personnel, and a reinforcement of scientific research on hazardous exposure. This was also among the key priorities of President Biden.

Tester and Moran, the two most senior senators on the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, will now collaborate to put the bill in order ahead of the senate voting session. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said that once the Senate passes the bill, it will be forwarded to the president, who will sign it into law.

The American Alliance for Military Veterans applauds the numerous veterans and VSOs for their decades-long activism and dedication to care for those who wear the uniform. Without the work these dedicated organizations and heroes, we would not be to this point.

Exposure to toxins is a cost of war, and we cannot skimp on meeting the needs and recognizing the sacrifices of our military members. Therefore, all the eyes are on the senate to see this bill passed and later signed by the president. Please take time to contact your senator in support of the Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act at <https://www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm>