

TOXIC EXPOSURE IN THE AMERICAN MILITARY ACT (TEAM Act)

For thousands of servicemembers who sacrificed to serve our country, that selfless service included exposure to chemical and environmental hazards, both in the United States and abroad, resulting in real and potential health risks. To ensure that these veterans receive the support and resources necessary to address these toxic exposures, Senator Thom Tillis (R-NC) introduced a historic bill, initially developed by the TEAM Coalition, that fundamentally reforms and improves how veterans exposed to toxic substances receive health care and benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The Toxic Exposure in the American Military Act (TEAM Act) expands access to health care for veterans exposed to toxins and establishes an independent scientific commission tasked with researching the health effects of such toxic exposure and reporting its findings to VA and Congress.

THE TEAM ACT:

- **Expands VA health care for veterans exposed to toxic substances. Treatment for conditions related to toxic exposures will be covered free of charge. Enrolled veterans will be eligible for treatment for unrelated conditions, but those services may be subject to a co-pay.**
- **Requires VA to respond to new scientific evidence regarding diseases associated with toxic exposure and establish new presumptions of service connection when supported by the science.**
- **Establishes an independent scientific commission to research the health effects of toxic exposure in veterans and report the commission's findings to VA and Congress.**
- **Ensures VA enters into agreements with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to review scientific studies regarding associations between diseases and exposure to toxic substances during military service.**
- **Expands training on toxic exposure issues for VA health care personnel.**
- **Requires VA to develop a questionnaire for primary care appointments to determine whether a veteran may have been exposed to toxic substances during service.**

Veterans exposed to toxicants have been forced to endure a long and arduous journey before receiving health care and benefits for diseases stemming from toxic exposure, even when said exposure is well documented. For Camp Lejeune veterans, it took decades of advocates pushing for documentation of their exposure, and once conceded, another decade to receive fair treatment and compensation for damages that were directly attributable to negligent actions of the U.S. Navy. The TEAM Act ensures that all veterans are given a fair and uniform process to receive the health care and benefits they are entitled following exposure to toxicants during their service.

SVAC favorably reported the TEAM Act by a unanimous bipartisan vote in the 116th Congress. Senator Tillis plans to reintroduce in the coming weeks.

If you have any questions or would like to join the effort, contact Bill_Bode@tillis.senate.gov.

