

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 15, 2020

Dear Colleague:

After the Vietnam War, an entire generation of servicemembers came back from war sick from exposure to Agent Orange while they were deployed. It took decades for Congress to legislate their illnesses as service-connected and require the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide Vietnam veterans with the health and benefits they earned and deserve.

And now, it is happening again.

Twenty years of the Global War on Terror (GWOT) have created yet another generation of sick servicemembers returning with ailments caused by exposure to a wide array of toxic chemicals and carcinogens, from burn pits, to burning jet fuel, oil-well fires, industrial solvents, depleted uranium, and many others. Within months or years of returning from deployment, exposed servicemembers and veterans now suffer from respiratory illnesses, cancers, and other diseases. Many of these illnesses have resulted in permanent disabilities and even death.

The Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense have been dismissing the serious health effects of these exposures. They keep hiding behind promises about “ongoing studies” to prove whether the illnesses are service-connected, which would grant veterans with access to VA health and disability services.

Yet, it is well established that burning regular household waste releases carcinogens, neuro-disruptors, and heavy metals that can have devastating effects on the lungs, heart, brain, thyroid, and immune system. Both federal and state government agencies have compiled decades of research linking these toxins to diseases. It’s why using burn pits on American soil is against the law and exposure to other toxins is highly regulated.

We have seen this movie before, and we have a solution.

Please join us in cosponsoring the ***Presumptive Benefits for War Fighters Exposed to Burn Pits and Other Toxins Act of 2020*** which would provide access to VA health and disability services for GWOT veterans, including [Afghanistan](#), [Iraq](#), [Gulf War](#), [K2](#) and every other country where our servicemembers fought and were exposed to toxins. Sick veterans should not have to spend their time collecting paperwork to access VA services they have earned and deserve.

To cosponsor, please contact Ivelisse.Porroa@mail.house.gov in Congressman Ruiz’s office or Brooke_Jamison@gillibrand.senate.gov in Senator Gillibrand’s office.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
U.S. Senator



Raul Ruiz, M.D.
Member of Congress