

ROA CEO asks fellow generals and admirals to urge Senate support for PACT Act veterans' toxicity benefits

Legislation to extend VA benefits to sickened and disabled vets hangs in balance with U.S. Senate

WASHINGTON, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, UNITED STATES, May 4, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The CEO of

the century-old, congressionally chartered Reserve Organization of America, retired U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Jeffrey E. Phillips, is asking fellow retired flag officers to urge their U.S. Senators to support legislation now pending in the Senate that would extend Department of Veterans Affairs benefits to veterans suffering from a variety of maladies and disabilities in connection with toxins.



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Retired Maj. Gen. Jeffrey E. Phillips, ROA chief executive officer

“Retired flag officers – generals and admirals – spent their lives caring for the men and women in their charge,” Phillips said. “I think they would consider it an honor to help ensure that those sickened and disabled in service to the nation get the care they deserve.” In his letter, Phillips wrote:

Fellow retired flag officers:

Our troops need us. I write to ask your support of legislation now before the United States Senate that would extend Department of Veterans Affairs benefits to service members with illnesses caused by exposure to burn pits

and other battlefield toxins.

As a senior leader in our military, the care of those under your command and in your trust was of the utmost importance to you. “Mission first, soldiers always,” was what we said in the Army, and I am sure you had a similar expression. This ethic of service to those entrusted to our care defined us; it went bone-deep.

I know it still does.

That is why I now respectfully ask you to contact your U.S. Senators and urge them to support the Honoring Our PACT Act; that stands for the Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act.

The bipartisan Honoring Our PACT Act ([H.R. 3967](#)) passed in the House in March. Over time, other bills have been introduced, but the PACT Act is the only bill that provides a comprehensive solution. Now it is up to the Senate to act and we expect a vote just after Memorial Day.

Some Senators are holding out for “better” legislation; but we leaders know that “perfect” is the enemy of good enough: the PACT Act passed the House. The PACT Act is supported by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and would be signed by the President. The PACT Act is backed by more than 60 military and veteran’s service organizations, including the one I represent, the century-old, congressionally chartered Reserve Organization of America (ROA).

The Honoring Our PACT Act is what our fellow veterans need. Benefits provided by the PACT Act (list provided by House Committee on Veterans Affairs):

- Provide Priority Group 6 VA health care for more than 3.5 million toxic-exposed veterans.
- Provide extension of combat eligibility for health care from 5 to 10 years with a one-year open enrollment period for those veterans who missed their window.
- Streamline VA’s review process for establishing toxic exposure presumptions.
- Concede exposure to airborne hazards/burn pits based on locations & dates of service.
- Require medical exams/opinions for certain veterans with toxic exposure disability claims.
- Add hypertension and Monoclonal Gammopathy of Undetermined Significance to the list of presumptions for Agent Orange exposure.
- Establish a presumption of service connection for 23 respiratory illnesses and cancers related to burn pits/airborne hazards exposure.
- Create a presumption of exposure to radiation for veterans who participated in cleanup activities in Palomares, Spain, and Enewetak Atoll.
- Allow for a new tort claim for veterans and families exposed to toxic water at Camp Lejeune.
- Expand Agent Orange exposure to veterans who served in Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia
- Improve data collection between VA and the Department of Defense.
- Commission studies related to incidents of cancer among veterans, health trends of Post-9/11 veterans and feasibility of providing healthcare to dependents of veterans.
- Require VA to provide standardized training to improve toxic exposure disability claims adjudications.
- Require VA to conduct outreach and provide resources to toxic-exposed veterans.

Your lifetime of faithful service as a leader in America’s armed forces enabled our wonderful young men and women to valiantly go about the business of ensuring our fellow citizens, and

indeed the free world, need not fear tyranny.

Many of these patriots now struggle with respiratory, nervous, musculoskeletal, and other disabilities that degrade their health, destroy their vitality, and eradicate their ability to work, support their family, and lead the life they earned with dedicated service.

They trusted us to lead them. Now they need our help. Please make your voice heard on their behalf.

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