

ROA applauds introduction of Susan E. Lukas 9/11 Servicemember Fairness Act

Legislation closes a critical gap in PACT Act coverage for Pentagon servicemembers exposed to toxicants following the 9/11 terrorist attacks.



WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES,
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EINPresswire.com/ -- On the 24th

anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, Rep. Suhas Subramanyam, D-Va., introduced the [Susan E. Lukas 9/11 Servicemember Fairness Act](#), legislation spearheaded by the Reserve Organization of America to close a longstanding gap in benefits for servicemembers who were at the Pentagon on 9/11 and compelled to return to duty in the days immediately afterward.

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On 9/11, I was serving at the Pentagon and was required to return to duty the very next day, unaware that the environment we were exposed to would have lasting consequences for our health.”

Retired Air Force Lt. Col. Susan E. Lukas

“On behalf of the Reserve Organization of America, I thank Congressman Subramanyam for sponsoring the Susan E. Lukas 9/11 Servicemember Fairness Act, which establishes a presumption of service connection for servicemembers who were at the Pentagon during the 9/11 attacks and returned to duty as early as the next day,” said retired Army Maj. Gen. John Hashem, ROA executive director.

“These patriots faced not only the devastation of that tragic morning but also long-term toxic exposures at the heart of our nation’s defense. This legislation honors their sacrifice and ensures they receive the care and benefits they have

earned.”

ROA launched its campaign Sept. 11, 2024, to establish a presumption of service connection for this group of veterans.

Building on that effort, in February 2025 ROA Director of Legislation and Military Policy Matthew Schwartzman [testified](#) before the House and Senate Committees on Veterans’ Affairs urging Congress to act. At the hearing, Schwartzman highlighted the story of retired Air Force Lt. Col. Susan E. Lukas, now the namesake of the legislation.

"I slept alongside toxic-exposed veterans and patriotic Americans on the Capitol steps to ensure the PACT Act became law," Schwartzman said, referencing the 72-hour fire watch vigil that helped push the landmark 2022 law over the finish line.

"The PACT Act has met expectations, but there are still veterans left behind, including those at the Pentagon on and after 9/11."

Throughout the summer, ROA built on this testimony with multiple follow-up meetings with both committees, reinforcing the urgency of legislative action and advancing its campaign to secure a presumption of service connection for these veterans.

Recognizing Lukas' story as emblematic of countless others, Rep. Subramanyam [pledged](#) to act.

"There are so many servicemembers who witnessed the devastating attack on the Pentagon on 9/11 and then bravely reported for duty soon thereafter to keep our country safe, exposing themselves to harmful toxicants that forever impacted their health," he said.

"These heroic men and women deserve the same benefits under the PACT Act that Congress has provided to other servicemembers, and I am proud to introduce this bill to close the gap in coverage."

For Lukas, the bill is both recognition and relief.

"On 9/11, I was serving at the Pentagon and was required to return to duty the very next day, unaware that the environment we were exposed to would have lasting consequences for our health," she said.

"Feeling the impact of the plane and seeing the dark plumes of smoke and debris was an experience I will never forget. For years, I did not realize my health issues were related to the 9/11 Pentagon attack. Aside from strong flashes of PTSD, my toxic exposures, in the absence of any protection from the VA, have impacted my day-to-day life. As a constituent and a veteran, I thank the congressman for his commitment to ensuring that no servicemember exposed to these conditions is left behind."

The Susan E. Lukas 9/11 Servicemember Fairness Act would extend PACT Act benefits to servicemembers who reported for duty at the Pentagon between Sept. 11 and Nov. 19, 2001, when the building was deemed clear of toxicants. These servicemembers are currently ineligible for presumption of service connection under the PACT Act or other programs afforded to first responders and others impacted by the attacks, including the World Trade Center Health Program.

With bipartisan support from Reps. Don Beyer, D-Va.; Bobby Scott, D-Va.; and Rob Wittman, R-Va., the Susan E. Lukas 9/11 Servicemember Fairness Act stands poised to finally bring recognition and care to those who answered the call when the nation needed them most.

About ROA

Since 1922, The Reserve Officers Association of the United States, now known as the Reserve Organization of America to reflect its all-ranks membership, has championed the cause of the Reserve Components at home and in war. With its unequaled credibility on America's Reserve Components, ROA is a powerful advocate in Congress, the Pentagon and VA, and policymaker offices throughout Washington. ROA leads the nation's efforts to ensure the Reserve Components are strong and ready. Learn more at roa.org.

Matthew Schwartzman
Reserve Organization of America
+1 202-646-7713

[email us here](#)

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