

## U.S. House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

B-234 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515

<http://veterans.house.gov>

May 19, 2021

The Honorable Denis McDonough  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary McDonough,

I am writing to urge you to provide timely assistance to Congress in our ongoing work on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of veterans who are suffering from toxic exposures.

As you know, on May 5, 2021, the Committee held a legislative hearing to discuss 15 proposals that would provide care and benefits to toxic exposed veterans. VA had ample opportunity to review each of those proposals in advance of the hearing. Yet, the Department declined to provide views or cost estimates for them, and failed to respond to many of the questions that I and other Committee Members asked about the bills. In the two weeks since, VA has also failed to provide any additional information or respond to lawmakers' outstanding inquiries including questions taken for the record. That is unacceptable, and a disservice to toxic exposed veterans and their families across the country.

Ensuring toxic-exposed veterans receive the services and support that they have earned is one of the highest priorities of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees. I believe it is one of your priorities as well. We must work together to achieve this goal. To do that, please provide formal views and cost estimates on each of the toxic exposure bills that were considered during the May 5<sup>th</sup> House hearing. Please also provide information about the impact each of those bills would have on the Veterans Health Administration and the Veterans Benefits Administration, to include estimated resource requirements and effects, if any, on the timely delivery of care and benefits to current beneficiaries. This information is requested by no later than Friday, June 4, 2021.

We have both heard painful stories of toxic-exposed veterans and their families. I invited one of those veterans and family members, Mr. James Price, to testify at the May 5<sup>th</sup> hearing about his experience as a toxic exposed veteran and as the surviving spouse of a veteran who recently died due to complications from toxic exposures. His heartbreaking account illustrates why we must act with urgency to assess how to appropriately support veterans in need. Thank you in advance for working with me to do that and for your commitment to our nation's veterans.

Sincerely,



**Mike Bost**  
Ranking Member

The Honorable Denis McDonough  
May 19, 2021  
Page 2

MB/sg

Cc: The Honorable Mark Takano, Chairman, Committee on Veterans' Affairs