



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
VETERANS' AFFAIRS
Republicans | Ranking Member Phil Roe, M.D.

H.R. 8506: Toxic Exposures in the American Military (TEAM) Act of 2020

Background:

The men and women who have raised their right hand in service to our nation deserve access to first class care and benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) when they hang up their uniforms. In recent years, there have been increasing concerns about veterans being exposed to toxins from burn pits or other airborne hazards during their service and potentially experiencing negative health effects, particularly pulmonary and respiratory issues, as a result. Currently, VA does not have a presumption of service connection for conditions linked to exposure to burn pits or other airborne hazards that may entitle these veterans to receive monthly disability compensation from VA. These veterans are also not eligible to seek care from VA to treat any illnesses that may result from their toxic exposure unless they are otherwise eligible to enroll in the VA healthcare system.

The Toxic Exposure in the American Military (TEAM) Act of 2020 would expand access to VA benefits and care for those veterans who have been exposed to toxins during their service by allowing them to enroll in the VA healthcare system and by developing a consistent process in which VA establishes presumptions of service connection for current and future toxic exposures. It would also advance scientific research into the health effects of toxic exposures by establishing an independent scientific commission and authorizing the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicines (NASEM) to conduct further studies. If NASEM finds that certain conditions are associated with exposure to toxic substances, VA would then be required to determine if a presumption of service connection is warranted for those disabilities. This bill would also expand training on toxic exposure issues for VA health care personnel.

The Message:

- Thousands of veterans who have served both at home and abroad have potentially been exposed to harmful toxins and environmental hazards while bravely serving our country.
- Veterans who were exposed to toxins during their time in the military should not be met with bureaucratic red tape when seeking VA care or benefits.
- The Toxic Exposure in the American Military Act of 2020 would make sure that those servicemembers who were exposed to harmful toxins in service can access the care and benefits they need as veterans.