

# HOUSE COMMITTEE ON **VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

REPUBLICANS | RANKING MEMBER MIKE BOST

## **The Toxic Exposures in the American Military (TEAM) Act of 2021**

### **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). There have been increasing concerns in recent years about exposure to burn pits or other toxic substances in the military causing negative health effects, particularly pulmonary and respiratory issues, for veterans later in life. Currently, VA does not have a presumption of service connection for conditions linked to toxic exposure that could entitle veterans to receive monthly disability compensation from VA. They are also not eligible to seek care from VA to treat any illnesses that may result from toxic exposure unless they are otherwise eligible to enroll in the VA healthcare system.

The Toxic Exposure in the American Military (TEAM) Act of 2021 would expand access to VA care and benefits for veterans who have experienced toxic exposure during their service by allowing them to enroll in the VA healthcare system and by developing a consistent process for VA to establish presumptions of service connection for current and future toxic exposures. It would also advance research regarding 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 toxic exposure, VA would be required to determine if a presumption of service connection is warranted. This bill would further expand training on toxic exposure for VA health care workers.

### **The Message:**

- Thousands of veterans have been exposed to burn pits and other potentially toxic substances while serving our country.
- Veterans who have experienced toxic exposure should be met with compassion, not red tape, when seeking VA care or benefits.
- The TEAM Act of 2021 would make sure that veterans can access the care and benefits they need to recover from toxic exposure.