

U.S. Rep. Moore: Votes to pass the Honoring our PACT Act

Posted on Thursday, Mar 3, 2022

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

Today, Congresswoman Moore voted to pass H.R. 3967, the Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2021 or the Honoring our PACT Act of 2021, which affects millions of our veterans who may have been exposed to toxins in the military. The bill would improve outreach efforts, support research studies on toxic exposure, and remove barriers that have hindered their ability to access care and benefits from the VA. In response, she released the following statement:

“Our service members sacrifice so much to serve our nation. In their service, they may also be exposed to toxins, such as PFAS in water, Agent Orange, burn pits during deployments, or radiation and other toxins a sobering and somber reminder of the costs that they make every day.

This exposure may have long-term health impacts on our veterans and some of these toxins have been connected to certain types of cancers and illnesses. But for some of our veterans, proving these conditions were service-connected so they can access care and benefits they have earned can be its own battle.

In President Biden’s State of the Union speech, he mentioned his late son, Beau Biden, and the exposure he experienced while deployed overseas. Through his grief and loss, he demonstrated his commitment to utilizing the resources needed to fully understand the impacts of toxic exposure on service members, and I share in his pledge. Congress must support this research and provide better support and health care to the veterans currently needing treatment for toxic exposure.

We have a duty to take care of our heroes who have put their bodies on the line for all of us. With the Honoring our PACT Act, we take a robust and comprehensive approach to ensure more service members can gain eligibility for the care they

need, expand service-connected illnesses related to toxic exposure, increase data collection and conduct studies, and other important measures that take care of those who selflessly care for us: our veterans.”

Provisions of the Honoring Our PACT Act include:

- Providing ‘Priority 6’ health care for veterans who have been exposed to toxic waste and an 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.
- Requiring the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to grant a presumption of exposure to airborne hazards from burn pits for individuals based on locations & dates of service and require medical exams/opinions for certain veterans with toxic exposure disability claims.
- Granting a presumption of exposure to radiation for veterans who participated in cleanup activities and who served in certain locations will be issued.
 - These efforts will be supported with studies to better understand the connection between exposure to toxins and incidents of cancer among other conditions.
- Establishing a registry through the VA for current or past members of the Armed Forces who may have been exposed to per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances at a Department of Defense location.

Additionally, I support amendments made during debate to strengthen the bill, including one amendment to provide grants to help strengthen services provided by country veterans service offices, like the one here in Milwaukee County that help veterans access their federal benefits among other efforts to support our veterans. Milwaukee county is home to more than 44,00 veterans and some over 3,500 veterans come through the door seeking assistance with both service-related and - unrelated matters at the Milwaukee County Veterans Services Office. However, that office is stressed by limited staff with two FTE to serve the largest county veteran population in the state.

This grant program included in the Honoring Our PACT Act can help ensure that these offices, including Milwaukee County, have the resources they need to properly support our veteran communities. Additionally, Milwaukee County has noted that with federal support, the office would be able to expand its footprint and offer services to a greater proportion of Milwaukee County veterans.

Read more on the Honoring our Pact Act [here](#).