



THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
VETERANS' AFFAIRS
MARK TAKANO, CHAIRMAN

Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022

TOPLINE: Once more, the House of Representatives has made clear to America's veterans how much we value their service and sacrifice. Veterans don't want more patriotic platitudes and hollow expressions of 'thank you for your service' -- they want action -- and this Congress has delivered. We have held true to our promise, held true to the pact we have made with America's veterans, held true to our belief that toxic exposure is a cost of war.

BACKGROUND:

The disability benefit claims process can be cumbersome for veterans with exposure to toxic substances. The **Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)** can streamline this process through presumptions **but has failed to take timely action in many instances.**

Every day more and more veterans speak out about exposure to environmental hazards and other toxic substances during military service like:

- Contaminated water at military bases,
- Airborne hazards from [burn pits](#) and other sources while serving abroad,
- Radiation from atomic testing and [cleanups](#), and
- Agent Orange exposure beyond Vietnam.

Health impacts vary from unexplained chronic multi-symptom illnesses to respiratory conditions and cancer.

CONGRESSIONAL ACTION:

Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our PACT Act of 2022, which originated in the House, is comprehensive legislation that seeks to address the full gamut of issues impacting toxic exposed veterans' access to earned benefits and care.

The **Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our PACT Act of 2022** will:

- Expand VA healthcare eligibility to Post-9/11 combat veterans, which includes more than 3.5 million toxic-exposed veterans;
- Create a streamlined framework for the establishment of future presumptions of service connection related to toxic exposure;
- Add 23 burn pit and toxic exposure-related conditions to VA's list of service-connected presumptive illnesses, including hypertension;
- Expand coverage for illnesses related to Agent Orange exposure;
- Includes Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Guam, American Samoa, and Johnston Atoll as locations for Agent Orange exposure;
- Strengthen federal research on toxic exposure;
- Improve VA's resources and training for toxic-exposed veterans; and
- Set VA and veterans up for success by investing in:
 - VA claims processing;
 - Recruiting and retaining VA's workforce; and
 - Expanding VA's healthcare infrastructure via leases.