

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES. 932

Designating the month of October 2024 as “National Military Toxic Exposures Awareness Month”.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

DECEMBER 17 (legislative day, DECEMBER 16), 2024

Mr. MORAN (for himself and Ms. ROSEN) submitted the following resolution;
which was considered and agreed to

RESOLUTION

Designating the month of October 2024 as “National Military Toxic Exposures Awareness Month”.

Whereas the profound impacts of military toxic exposures on generations of veterans and military families have created the persistent and urgent need for enhanced public awareness and preventative health measures;

Whereas the history of military toxic exposures dates back more than a century, particularly with the use of chemical warfare in World War I;

Whereas, despite reductions in certain chemical agents during World War II, members of the Armed Forces continued to face significant toxic exposures, including hazardous substances from naval vessels and herbicides during the Korean War and Agent Orange and other tactical herbicides during the Vietnam War;

Whereas the impact of toxic exposure is not limited to veterans alone, but can also affect their families, including their children with medical conditions potentially related to their parents' service, including children born with health issues following the Vietnam War;

Whereas the legacy of toxic exposure extends to veterans known as "Atomic Veterans", who experienced hazardous radiation exposure, further compounding the health risks associated with service in the Armed Forces;

Whereas generations of veterans have faced toxic exposures while serving abroad;

Whereas veterans have encountered other toxic exposures and environmental hazards during service in the Armed Forces, including contaminated drinking water, asbestos, polychlorinated biphenyl, lead, and radiation;

Whereas, in 1991, the Vietnam Veterans of America achieved a significant legislative victory, when Congress passed the Agent Orange Act of 1991 (Public Law 102-4), leading to the recognition of Agent Orange as a presumptive hazard and paving the way for benefits for affected veterans;

Whereas subsequent conflicts, including the Persian Gulf War, have seen soldiers, airmen, sailors, and marines facing similar debilitating health issues due to toxic exposures, reinforcing the need for continued advocacy and research;

Whereas multiple veterans service organizations, including Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, the Vietnam Veterans of America, and others have worked tirelessly to secure legislative improvements, including studies on the effects of

toxic exposure and the passage of the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022 (Public Law 117–168), also known as the PACT Act;

Whereas the PACT Act expanded eligibility for benefits and health care to veterans of all eras who were exposed to toxic substances;

Whereas the PACT Act established a new, responsive framework so that the Department of Veterans Affairs could more rapidly and transparently make decisions on the presumption of connection to service in the Armed Forces for illnesses and other conditions associated with toxic exposure;

Whereas burn pits, hazardous particulate matter, Agent Orange, oil well fires, fuel leaks, and other toxic events present in various conflicts have emerged as significant health concerns, necessitating research into their long-term effects on veterans and their families;

Whereas the lessons from toxic exposures guide the work and research of the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and Congress;

Whereas the effects of toxic exposure are not confined to members of the Armed Forces and their family members, but also can impact civilian workers and residents of military installations exposed to hazardous materials;

Whereas continued vigilance is necessary to prevent future incidents of toxic exposure; and

Whereas the designation of October 2024 as “National Military Toxic Exposures Awareness Month” serves to highlight the historical significance of toxic exposure during service in the Armed Forces, raise awareness of toxic ex-

posure, and commend the work of veterans and veterans’ advocates who labor to meet the needs of former members of the Armed Forces who were exposed to toxic substances while in service of the United States: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) designates October 2024 as “National Military Toxic Exposures Awareness Month”;

3 (2) recognizes the profound impact toxic exposures have had on veterans, members of the Armed Forces, their families, and their survivors;

4 (3) honors the sacrifices of individuals impacted by toxic exposure in the Armed Forces;

5 (4) calls upon the Department of Defense to reinforce the commitment by the Federal Government to prevent future incidents of toxic exposure among members of the Armed Forces;

6 (5) will continue to explore legislative initiatives aimed at improving health outcomes and preventive measures for current and future generations of members of the Armed Forces and veterans;

7 (6) commends the Department of Defense for striving to meet or exceed industry standards while working within status of forces agreements with host partner nations overseas in various international lo-

1 cations and urges continued efforts to meet or ex-
2 ceed such standards;

3 (7) encourages the people of the United States
4 to observe National Military Toxic Exposures
5 Awareness Month by—

6 (A) honoring the sacrifices of individuals
7 impacted by toxic exposure in the Armed
8 Forces;

9 (B) promoting awareness of the ongoing
10 challenges and of the resources available to vet-
11 erans and their families, caregivers, and sur-
12 vivors from the Department of Veterans Af-
13 fairs; and

14 (C) supporting affected veterans and their
15 families; and

16 (8) encourages the Department of Veterans Af-
17 fairs to continue educating the public and advo-
18 cating for veterans and their families and survivors
19 affected by toxic exposure by—

20 (A) promoting awareness of the impact of
21 toxic exposure on veterans, members of the
22 Armed Forces, and their families;

23 (B) encouraging veterans to utilize avail-
24 able resources from the Department of Vet-

1 erans Affairs, veterans service organizations,
2 and other entities;

3 (C) providing opportunities for research to
4 understand the impacts of toxic exposure and to
5 prevent future incidents of toxic exposure;

6 (D) reaching all veterans who may have
7 encountered toxic exposures during service in
8 the Armed Forces and offering screenings and
9 relevant information;

10 (E) improving clinical practice guidelines
11 for veterans exposed to toxic substances that
12 best meet the unique medical needs of those
13 veterans; and

14 (F) working with civic-minded groups and
15 the people of the United States to thank mem-
16 bers of the Armed Forces and veterans for their
17 service and sacrifice.

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