



March 22, 2017

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
United States Senate
302 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

On behalf of the Association of the United States Navy, we would like to pledge our support for S. 319, the Helping Veterans Exposed to Burn Pits Act. This bill directs the Department of Veterans Affairs to establish a center of excellence in the prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, treatment, and rehabilitation of health conditions relating to exposure to burn pits and other environmental exposures in Afghanistan or Iraq.

The burning of waste on military bases exposed many servicemembers to a variety of potentially harmful substances. Plastic, aerosol cans, electronic equipment, human waste, tires, and batteries were thrown into open pits, often doused with jet fuel, and set on fire. As a result, many deployed soldiers were exposed to smoke from these open-air burn pits. Health effects from exposure to chemicals found in burn pits may include cancer, neurological effects, reproductive effects, respiratory toxicity, and cardiovascular toxicity. Troops who have worked in these areas are subject to higher rates of asthma, emphysema, and rare lung disorders.

In selecting the site where the center will be, the VA should consider places that:

- Are equipped with the specialized equipment needed to study, diagnose, and treat health conditions relating to exposure
- Have a track record of publishing information on post-deployment health exposures among veterans who have served in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom

The VA will ensure that the center collaborates with the DOD, institutions of higher education, and other appropriate and private entities to:

- Provide for dissemination within the VA of best practices for the treatment of such conditions and training of health professionals
- Provide guidance for the VA and DOD health systems in determining the personnel required to provide quality health care for members of the Armed Services and veterans with such conditions
- Establish and oversee a program to train VA and DOD health professionals in the treatment of conditions

- Facilitate advancements in the study for short and long term effects of exposure
- Provide medical treatment to veterans diagnosed with medical conditions specific to exposure to burn pits.

Thank you for taking an active role in such an important issue to the Military and Veteran community by working to improve the lives and careers of those who served our great nation. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns at 703-548-5800 or at michael.little@ausn.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Joseph Little". To the right of the signature, there are handwritten initials "ABH" and "USNR" in blue ink.

Michael J. Little
Director of Legislative Affairs