



March 22, 2017

The Honorable Al Franken
United States Senate
309 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. 283, the Mark Takai Atomic Veterans Healthcare Parity Act. This bill brings important health care benefits to "Atomic Veterans" who were exposed to high levels of harmful radiation when assigned to clean up nuclear testing sites during the late 1970s.

The Mark Takai Atomic Veterans Healthcare Parity Act—named after the late Congressman Mark Takai of Hawaii—would designate veterans who participated in the nuclear cleanup of Enewetak Atoll on the Marshall Islands as "radiation-exposed veterans," and make them eligible to receive the same healthcare and benefits given to other service members who were involved in active nuclear tests.

Enewetak Atoll in the Marshall Islands was the site of more than 40 nuclear tests between 1946 and 1958. The service members who participated in its nuclear cleanup between 1977 and 1980 suffer from high rates of cancers due to their exposure to radiation and nuclear waste, but are currently unable to receive the same treatments and service-related disability presumptions that other "radiation-exposed veterans" receive. The Mark Takai Atomic Veterans Healthcare Parity Act would tackle this issue by extending key VA benefits to those who helped clean up the Marshall Islands, which remain partly uninhabitable due to high levels of radiation.

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, the text "ABH²(AW/Sea)" and "USNR" is written in blue ink.

Michael J. Little
Director of Legislative Affairs

