

**Provide for Veterans affected by Toxic Exposure** - The exposure of military personnel to toxic substances, both while deployed overseas or stationed at home has been an ongoing issue across a range of wars and generations. These exposures have resulted in conditions and illnesses among veterans which can have long-lasting effects on health and quality of life. The American Legion has fought an ongoing struggle for service-connected disability benefits for adverse health conditions linked to exposures from various toxic substances.

It took decades for VA to provide relief for veterans of Vietnam exposed to Agent Orange. The U.S. government still has yet to finish its work for Vietnam veterans, and we have begun the cycle anew with the current generation of service members who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Millions of service members have been deployed in the Global War on Terrorism, and a disturbingly high percentage of them have been exposed to toxic hazards during their service, from burn pits in Iraq and Afghanistan to radiation exposures at Karshi-Khanabad (K2) in Uzbekistan. Yet, VA has not conducted sufficient studies to determine illnesses and diseases related to various types of toxic chemicals, nor has it begun to develop a list of presumptive conditions.

We must break this cycle of care that is considered "too little, too late" for our veterans. They cannot wait decades to receive the care they need and rightfully deserve.

**Provide for Veterans affected by Toxic Exposure (sample letter)**

As your constituent and a member of the American Legion family, I ask you to co-sponsor the COST of War Act of 2021 and support our veterans suffering from the effects of toxic exposure. Thousands of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have been exposed to toxic chemicals from burn pits. Without congressional action, they are likely to face the same VA red tape and denials that Vietnam Veterans are still fighting against from Agent Orange exposure.

These heroes should not wait decades to receive the care they need and rightfully deserve. The COST of War Act recognizes the federal government's responsibility to provide health care and disability compensation to veterans fighting the effects of toxic exposure connected to their military service by allowing all veterans who were at risk of toxic exposure, including 3.5 million Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, to obtain immediate and lifelong access to health care from VA.

The American Legion proudly supports this legislation, and I along with the nearly 2 million members of The American Legion ask that you to cosponsor and support the COST of War Act today.