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Klobuchar, Tillis Introduce Bipartisan Legislation to Help Veterans Exposed to Toxic Burn Pits

Many believe the smoke produced from the burning of waste on military bases in Iraq and Afghanistan has exposed service members to harm; Health effects from exposure to chemicals found in burn pits may include cancer, neurological effects, reproductive effects, respiratory toxicity, and cardiovascular toxicity

This bill would create a center of excellence within the Department of Veterans Affairs in the prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, treatment, and rehabilitation of health conditions relating to exposure to burn pits

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Thom Tillis (R-NC) today introduced bipartisan legislation to help veterans who have been exposed to toxic burn pits. Many believe the smoke produced from the burning of waste on military bases in Iraq and Afghanistan has exposed service members to harmful substances. Items such as plastics, aerosol cans, electronic equipment, human waste, metal containers, tires, and batteries are thrown into these open pits, sometimes doused with jet fuel, and set ablaze. Health effects from exposure to chemicals found in burn pits may include cancer, neurological effects, reproductive effects, respiratory toxicity, and cardiovascular toxicity. The *Helping Veterans Exposed to Burn Pits Act*

would create a center of excellence within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in the prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, treatment, and rehabilitation of health conditions relating to exposure to burn pits.

“Veterans who fought on the front lines in Iraq and Afghanistan are coming home with major health complications that could be linked to their exposure to toxic burn pits,” said Klobuchar. **“Our bipartisan bill will help address the health needs of veterans who have fallen ill after being exposed to burn pits. It’s clear we need to do more to make sure that all veterans get the care and support they need when they return home from the battlefield.”**

“The smoke from burn pits in Afghanistan and Iraq exposed American service members to harmful substances, and we have a moral obligation to provide them with care for health complications that developed as a result,” said Tillis. **“This bipartisan bill moves our nation closer to fulfilling that obligation by creating a center of excellence within the VA to assist in the diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation for veterans exposed to toxic burn pits.”**

This bill has been endorsed by the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Sergeant Sullivan Center, American Lung Association, American Thoracic Society, and the Coalition for Pulmonary Fibrosis.

Klobuchar also has worked in a bipartisan manner to modernize G.I. Bill benefits for our troops and to strengthen funding veterans’ health care, including service related injuries related to Agent Orange exposure. She has also authored bipartisan bills on behalf of our nation’s veterans and their families to expand job training and employment opportunities and to reduce veterans’ homelessness.

Tillis is a member of the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs and has co-introduced 7 bipartisan bills that have been referred to the committee, which are aimed at improving health care services at the VA and increasing educational opportunities for veterans and their family members.

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