



Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary
Department of Wisconsin
Legislative Bulletin – October 2019
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Our National VFW Legislative Delegation is scheduled to meet with members of the 116th Congress on Capitol Hill from September 9th – 12th. One critical item from the 2019 VFW Priority Goals that is being discussed with legislators is:

Burn Pits

The use of open-air burn pits in combat zones has caused invisible, but grave health complications for our nation's service members, past and present. In a recent news story on CBS, Army Veteran Dan Jentik struggles with what most don't even think about – taking a breath. He is one of thousands of men and women who served in Iraq and Afghanistan who may be sick or dying because they inhaled smoke from massive burn pits next to their bases.

Particulate matter, dioxins – the destructive compound found in Agent Orange – and other harmful materials are all present in burn pits throughout Iraq and Afghanistan.

A report by the National Academy of Medicine noted a connection between burn pit exposure and numerous health conditions, including emphysema, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and asthma. A peer-reviewed study titled, "New-Onset Asthma Among Soldiers Serving in Iraq and Afghanistan," found a connection between deployment to Iraq and Afghanistan and asthma among deployed veterans. The Academy also concluded that certain birth defects and reproductive issues may be associated with burn pit exposure. Other studies have shown similar evidence of association between pulmonary conditions and exposure to toxic burn pits.

Burn pit exposure is also impacting the health of men and women currently serving, so it is important for the Department of Defense (DOD) to track exposures and conditions prevalent among service members who have deployed to areas where burn pits have been used. The DOD has not effectively done so.

Congressman Raul Ruiz of California stated, "We cannot let burn pit exposure veterans be the 'Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange' of our generation. We just can't do that."

So, what can we do? Contact your Congressmen and Senators and tell them to:

- Pass H.R. 663 or S. 191, Burn Pits Accountability Act, which would improve how DOD tracks, treats and presents the harmful impact of burn pits.
- Establish and properly fund independent research on the impact of burn pits on exposed veterans and their descendants through the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP).
- Pass legislation requiring the VA to make much-needed improvements to the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry
- Provide veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan the care and benefits they need to cope with pulmonary health conditions that are associated with their exposure to burn pits.

You can sign up for the VFW Action Corps or go to CAPWIZ info, both located on our Department webpage under the Legislative program, to take action on these bills. Or go to the following website to find your Congressional Representatives:

<https://votesmart.org>

Encourage your friends and neighbors to sign up for the Action Corps, as well. You do NOT need to be a VFW or VFWA member to sign up and take action.

**Let's All Continue "Giving Hope to Veterans and Families"
As we're
"Serving Veterans with Aloha"**

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