

March 8, 2022

## **Underwood-Led Bill to Expand VA Healthcare to Toxic-exposed Veterans Passes House**

WASHINGTON – Congresswoman Lauren Underwood voted for H.R. 3967, the Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act or Honoring our PACT Act, which will finally treat toxic exposure as a cost of war by addressing the full range of issues impacting toxic-exposed veterans, including access to earned benefits and health care through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

The Honoring our PACT Act is a comprehensive legislative package that will expand healthcare to over 3.5 million veterans exposed to toxic substances during their military service and finally acknowledge exposure to burn pits and airborne hazards impacts veteran health. It will create presumptive eligibility for 23 respiratory illnesses and cancers, shifting the burden of proof off our veterans. Critically, this bipartisan legislation will also streamline VA's presumption decision making process, so veterans no longer have to wait decades for help.

**“When we sent our servicemembers into harm’s way, we made a promise that we would take care of them when they came home,”** said Rep. Underwood. **“That is why I am proud to be an original cosponsor of the bipartisan Honoring our PACT Act, and I voted yes on the legislation to keep my promise and ensure all veterans exposed to toxic substances during their service can access the care and benefits they’ve earned. The Senate must act swiftly to get this life-saving legislation for our veterans passed and signed into law.”**

As a Member of the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, Congresswoman Underwood has been a longtime champion for toxic-exposed veterans. She is an original cosponsor of the Honoring our PACT Act and helped lead efforts to advance the legislation through the Veterans’ Affairs Committee.

Leaders from 11 Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) including the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. (VFW), Disabled American Veterans (DAV), The American Legion (TAL), Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), Wounded Warrior Project (WWP), Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), Blinded Veterans Association (BVA), Minority Veterans of America (MVA), and Burn Pits 360, among others, support the comprehensive bipartisan package.

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