

May 17, 2023

The Honorable Jon Tester
U.S. Senate
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
412 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Bost
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee of Veterans' Affairs
364 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20003

The Honorable Jerry Moran
U.S. Senate
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
412 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mark Takano
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
550 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Tester and Bost and Ranking Members Moran and Takano,

On behalf of the undersigned, who represent the interest and concerns of well over one million members of the Uniformed Services, their family members, retirees, and survivors, we are writing to make sure you are aware of the latest efforts by the U.S. Government to delay justice for veterans and their families exposed to toxic water at Camp Lejeune.

We strongly supported the PACT Act in the 117th Congress and, in particular, the Camp Lejeune Justice Act, which was included in that historic legislation. The Camp Lejeune Justice Act was intended to finally bring relief and justice to the veterans and their families exposed to contaminated water at the base and who have suffered numerous cancers, neurological diseases, and death, including thousands of miscarriages and deaths of young children.

It has been nearly nine months since the bill was signed into law and the Navy has not settled a single claim. As bad as that is, our organizations were shocked to read the Department of Justice's recent responses to the Camp Lejeune toxic water lawsuits in federal court. The Department's list of defenses implies the veterans and family members themselves could be culpable for their exposure, and it seems as if they may try to shift responsibility for the toxic water exposure at the base for nearly 35 years to those who suffered from it.

The Department states that veterans and their families might have "assumed the risk" that there was toxic water on Camp Lejeune and, if so, should not recover damages. They also state that veterans and their families might have been able to do more to "mitigate damages," and that exposure at the base might have been caused by their own "negligence."

In other words, despite the fact the U.S. Navy knew about and covered up the toxic exposure at the base, the Justice Department is actually suggesting Camp Lejeune veterans and their families might be to blame and may be responsible for poisoning themselves: the veterans and their families living at Camp Lejeune could have known that drinking or bathing in water on base was a risk; that they might have been negligent for drinking or bathing in the water; and that they may not have taken the adequate steps to protect themselves.

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It is our hope that you and other congressional leaders, who have done so much to help veterans, can see for yourselves how harmful these latest efforts to delay and deny justice are for the men and women who have served our country.

Veterans and family members affected by toxic water at Camp Lejeune have suffered greatly, and they have suffered enough, as Congress made clear by passing the Camp Lejeune Justice Act. They were poisoned by the government, and the government hid it and lied about it for decades. They were denied any health care until 2012 and the benefits are limited to a short list of diseases. Since it was implemented in 2017, they continue to be denied disability benefits at an alarming rate.

On behalf of the undersigned and veterans across the country, we hope that you will follow the Camp Lejeune federal court proceedings and speak out on behalf of the plaintiffs who want nothing more than a fair chance to have their cases heard. The delays and latest filing by the Department of Justice are further evidence that the government is trying to outlast the aging veterans and their families in the hope of avoiding accountability.

Thank you again for your support for veterans and for your attention to this issue.

Sincerely,

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[Freedom Bird Foundation](#)

[Heart of an Ace](#)

[Joint Operation North Star](#)

[NMRG Rescue Project](#)

[Operation 620](#)

[Operation Recovery](#)

[Ops Sacred Promise](#)

[Project Exodus Relief](#)

[React DC](#)

[Rule 20](#)

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