

March 26, 2024

The Honorable Dick Durbin  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on the Judiciary  
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jim Jordan  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on the Judiciary  
2138 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lindsey Graham  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on the Judiciary  
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Nadler  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on the Judiciary  
2138 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Durbin and Jordan and Ranking Members Graham and Nadler,

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 respectfully appeal to your sense of duty, responsibility and care for the welfare of those who have bravely served our country and their families. As Veterans serving Veterans, our commitment to our constituents compels us to share our deep concerns regarding the recent order on jury trials for Veterans and their family members who were victims of contaminated water at Camp Lejeune.

Addressing toxic exposure has long been a top priority for our organizations, and we proudly advocated for the Camp Lejeune Justice Act (CLJA), which was intended to provide a fair and timely path for judicial relief for the servicemembers, Veterans and family members who were exposed to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune between 1953 and 1987.

The new CLJA was intended to require the Department of Justice (DOJ) and Department of the Navy (Navy) to address the plight of those affected by the Camp Lejeune water contamination crisis. Instead, the DOJ and the Navy continue to evade their responsibility to Camp Lejeune contamination victims. A meager few claims have been settled in the year and a half since the bill was signed into law. Furthermore, the new "Elective Option" falls woefully short of delivering justice to the Veterans and their families who have suffered for decades.

We were dismayed to learn of yet another significant barrier to justice for these families when the United States District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina issued an order finding the jury trial language in the CLJA unclear and ambiguous. As a result, it granted the DOJ's motion to strike the right to a jury trial, despite the law's language explicitly stating:

*"Public Law 177 – 168 Section 804. Federal Cause of Action Relating to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina subsection (d) Exclusive Jurisdiction and Venue. — The United States District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina shall be the exclusive venue for such action. **Nothing in this subsection shall impair the right of any party to a trial by jury.**"*

This order goes against Congressional intent as clearly stated by the House authors of the bill. Representatives Matt Cartwright (D-PA-8) and Greg Murphy (R-NC-3), in an October 30, 2023, statement for the Congressional record:

***“Let there be no ambiguity. Let this be understood to be our unequivocal expression of our intent, from the inception of the bill through the final passage and into enactment: the claimants who have suffered to intensely as a result of the toxic water at Camp Lejeune have the right to a trial by jury.”***

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina's interpretation of the bill language is puzzling, but now that the court has ruled, we urge Congress to address this issue by enacting a clarification of the law to ensure Camp Lejeune Veterans and their families receive the jury trials they deserve as Congress intended.

Jury trials are a critical component of justice and ultimately a semblance of healing for the Veterans and their family members. Victims of the water contamination have clearly underscored the importance of telling their stories to a jury of their peers. Their stories and struggles must be made known to the fellow Americans they—and their families—served, not just a judge.

The DOJ's motion to strike jury trials is yet another effort to avoid responsibility for these Veterans and their families. Members of Congress should not accept this ruling as final and must stand with Veterans to clarify their right to a jury trial in statute before it is too late.

We understand nothing can fully compensate these brave servicemembers and their families for the years of suffering they have endured and the subsequent cover-up of toxic water contamination at Camp Lejeune. We demand the government take responsibility and follow Congressional intent. The federal government must recognize the duty it owes to these individuals and cease attempts to evade its responsibility for the harm they have endured. Camp Lejeune families deserve nothing less than a fair and just resolution to their longstanding ordeal, and jury trials are absolutely critical to that process.

Sincerely,

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[Flanders Fields](#)

[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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[Task Force Pineapple](#)

[The Independence Fund](#)

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[The Moral Compass Federation](#)

[The Veteran's Education Project](#)

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