



Action Alert

**Legislative Alert #112-15: SUPPORT H.R. 3337 and S. 1798, the
Open Burn Pit Registry Act
VETERANS**

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Issue Background: In both Iraq and Afghanistan the U.S. Military has oftentimes been required to use “open-air” burn pits as the only means to dispose of waste. Many veterans, of both Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), have been reporting symptoms now being linked to the use of these “open-air” burn pits. Unfortunately, little is known about the effects of “open-air” burn pits and the long term health problems they may cause. While there is still extensive research to be done, symptoms such as respiratory, cardiovascular and gastrointestinal failure have been commonly linked to the inhalation of chemicals identified in such “open-air” burn pits, such as the one in Balad, Iraq.

Action Required: Contact your Representatives and Senators and urge them to consider and cosponsor H.R. 3337 and S. 1798, the Open Burn Pit Registry Act. These bipartisan bills were introduced by Representative Todd Akin (R-MO-02) and Senator Tom Udall (D-NM) on 3 November 2011 in the House and Senate respectively. The bills would direct the Secretary of Veterans’ Affairs (VA) to: (1) establish and maintain an open burn pit registry for members of the Armed Services deployed in a contingency operation in Iraq or Afghanistan who may have been exposed to toxic chemicals and fumes caused by open burn pits used for disposing of solid waste, (2) include in such registry information necessary to ascertain and monitor the health effects of such exposure, (3) develop a public information campaign to inform eligible individuals about the registry and (4) periodically notify such individuals of significant developments in the study and treatment of conditions associated with such exposure. The bills would also require the Secretary of the VA to: (1) contract with an independent organization to develop a report assessing the effectiveness of actions taken to collect and maintain information on the health effects of such exposure and (2) submit the completed report to Congress.

Details (To Be Put Into Letter):

It took until 1991 to pass legislation related to the military's use of Agent Orange in Vietnam and the work is still not complete. The Open Burn Pit Registry Act is a chance to make sure history does not repeat itself. Our OIF and OEF veterans deserve the highest quality of health care as they gave the highest quality of sacrifice. The inhalation of chemicals found throughout OIF and OEF military compounds have not only been associated with respiratory, cardiovascular, and gastrointestinal failure, but also with the weakening of one's immune system. This legislation will establish a registry similar to the Agent Orange Registry and the Gulf War Syndrome Registry. Basing the Open Burn Pit

Registry on these models all but eliminates the crucial and time/resource period of "trial-and-error" that most new programs must go through.

H.R. 3337 and S. 1798 would ensure our nations veterans receive the health care attention they deserve. Going further, the Open Burn Pit Registry Act marks a time of change in Congress, whereas this bill serves to investigate and not just treat the problem. Although the Department of Defense (DOD) has been slow to identify the health issues now being associated with open burn pits, it has at least accepted that these reported conditions, and the open burn pits, are linked. The bills serve to both help those already suffering from health related problems associated with open burn pits, as well as delve into the subject with an open and interested investigation.

Take Action: Click the "Take Action" link at the top of the Alert to immediately email and/or write to your Senators and Representatives. This is the quickest and most effective method of expressing your views to Congress. You can also write and/or e-mail the 'Details' section or edit as you desire for a more personalized communication. Also, contact freinds and family and urge them to use the Contact Congress feature on AUSN's website as well. Please direct any questions concerning this issue to our Director of Legislation, Anthony Wallis, at 703-548-5800 or at Anthony.Wallis@ausn.org.