

Pease Families,

## **Senators Hassan, Tillis Introduce Bipartisan Legislation to Strengthen Health Care for Veterans Exposed to Toxic Substances**

*Bipartisan Legislation Supported by NH Veterans of Foreign of Wars, NH American Legion, NH PFAS Advocate Doris Brock, and Members of the Toxic Exposures in the American Military (TEAM) Coalition*

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Maggie Hassan (D-NH) and Thom Tillis (R-NC) today introduced the *Toxic Exposure in the American Military (TEAM Act)*, bipartisan legislation that fundamentally reforms and improves how veterans exposed to toxic substances receive health care and benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Senators Hassan and Tillis are joined by Senators Jerry Moran (R-KS), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Marsha Blackburn (R-TN), and Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) in introducing the bipartisan legislation.

*Senator Hassan participated in a press conference today with Senator Tillis and veterans service organizations to highlight the TEAM Act. Click [here](#) to watch.*

“We have an obligation to ensure that veterans who return home from war receive the care that they need and have earned,” **Senator Hassan** said. “Unfortunately, for millions of veterans across the country who may have been exposed to toxic substances during their service, that obligation is not being met. Our bipartisan bill would take long overdue steps to ensure that veterans can receive health care for diseases that they develop as a result of toxic substance exposure during their service.”

“Thank you for reintroducing this bill, it’s been a long time coming,” said **Paul Lloyd, Adjutant for NH Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)**. “Hopefully when this is complete it will make it easier and smoother for our affected veterans to get the help they need. Here in New Hampshire, we personally know folks who are affected by toxic exposures from foreign grounds, to back here in New Hampshire at Pease, and continue to fight to get the help and assistance for treatment that they need.”

“The American Legion fully supports and thanks Senator Maggie Hassan (D-NH) and Senator Thomas Tillis (R-NC) for co-sponsoring the Toxic Exposure in the US Military, (TEAM) Act,” **Oliver Brooks, Commander of the NH American Legion** said. “The American Legion has fought for service connected disability benefits for conditions linked to toxic exposure for decades and will continue to do so for this generation.”

“Thank you Senator Hassan for taking a huge step in recognizing and acting on the toxic exposure of our military personnel,” said **Doris Brock, New Hampshire PFAS advocate**. “Your support and leadership on this bill is so appreciated. This bill has taken way too long for consideration. We must continue to advocate for toxic exposure beyond the Airborne Hazards, Burn Pits and ‘Other toxic exposure.’ I and my fellow NH Guardsmen and women would like to see medical and disability coverage for ALL toxic exposure in all of the 50 states. Our military and guard have served our country faithfully and certainly deserve this and more. This bill is so important to us and we must all stand behind you and support this bill.”

“DAV supports the Toxic Exposure in the American Military Act as it would ensure that veterans exposed to toxic substances during military service, including those who served near open air burn pits, will have access to critical VA health care and benefits,” said **Joy Ilem, Disabled American Veterans (DAV) National Legislative Director**. “The men and women with illnesses due to these exposures cannot afford to wait! We thank Senator Tillis and Senator Hassan for their efforts to keep the promise to those who served.”

***To read a letter signed by 30 veteran service organization in support of the TEAM Act, click [here](#).***

Specifically, the *TEAM Act*:

- Expands VA health care for veterans exposed to toxic substances. Treatment for conditions related to toxic exposures will be covered free of charge. Enrolled veterans will be eligible for treatment for unrelated conditions, but those services may be subject to a co-pay.
- Requires VA to respond to new scientific evidence regarding diseases associated with toxic exposure and establish new presumptions of service connection when supported by the science.
- Ensures VA enters into agreements with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to review scientific studies regarding associations between diseases and exposure to toxic substances during military service.
- Establishes an independent scientific commission to assist the VA in determining the health effects of toxic exposure in veterans and report the commission’s findings to VA and Congress.
- Expands training on toxic exposure issues for VA health care personnel.
- Requires VA to develop a questionnaire for primary care appointments to determine whether a veteran may have been exposed to toxic substances during service.

Senator Hassan is working to ensure that veterans exposed to toxins in the line of duty receive the health care that they need. The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 included a measure that Senator Hassan [supported](#) to ensure that Vietnam War veterans can more easily access care for additional diseases associated with Agent Orange exposure.

Additionally, Senator Hassan cosponsored legislation that was included in the [final veterans package](#) that was signed into law last Congress to direct the VA to work with the Department of Health and Human Services to assess possible health conditions linked to service members' exposure to toxic substances at Karshi-Khanabad Air Base (K2) in Uzbekistan. Furthermore, Senator Hassan joined colleagues in [reintroducing the bipartisan Burn Pits Accountability Act](#) to examine the health effects of exposure to open burn pits and toxic airborne chemicals on service members and veterans.

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**Senator Jeanne Shaheen, Reintroduced bi-partisan legislation aimed at establishing a National PFAS/PFOA exposure registry (click below)**

[Shaheen, Rounds Reintroduce Bill to Help Service Members & Their Families Exposed to PFAS Contamination | U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire \(senate.gov\)](#)

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As always, the NH Division of Veteran Services is seeking your assistance getting the word out to all those that need to be aware of these Health Concerns. If you are connected with folks that may be affected or need to be aware of what is going on; please have them reach out to the New Hampshire Division of Veteran Services to get on the Pease Health Concerns Contact List (formerly the Pease AFB Registry).

Email: [NHSVC.VBAMAN@va.gov](mailto:NHSVC.VBAMAN@va.gov)

Call: (603) 624-9230 Ext 301

Please have them prepared to pass along the following information:

- Veteran's First Name
- Veteran's Last Name
- Relationship to the Veteran if they are sending the email on behalf of the Veteran
- Full Mailing Address
- Best Phone Number for contact purposes
- Best Email Address for contact purposes
- What Unit the Veteran was assigned to while they worked at Pease
- And the actual years they were assigned (ex: 1980-1984)