



UNITED STATES CONGRESSMAN
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REPRESENTING NEW YORK'S 25TH DISTRICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONGRESSMAN JOE MORELLE STRENGTHENS ESSENTIAL HEALTHCARE FOR VETERANS

Votes to pass legislation expanding healthcare coverage for 3.5 million veterans exposed to toxic substances during their service

July 13, 2022 (Washington, D.C.) — Today, Congressman Joe Morelle voted to pass legislation to improve healthcare services for veterans who have been exposed to dangerous toxins in the line of duty. The *Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxins Act* (or *Honoring our PACT Act*) has now passed both the House and Senate and now heads to the President's desk for his signature.

"There's no greater pain than to watch a loved one suffer grave health issues and not be able to access the healthcare they need. Sadly, this is the reality too many veterans and their families face," **said Congressman Morelle**. "This legislation seeks to right that grave injustice by ensuring all veterans who have been exposed to toxic substances during their service have full access to the essential care and benefits they have rightfully earned. This is one small way we can show our gratitude to our nation's heroes, and I look forward to seeing this important bill signed into law by the President."

"For more than 100 years, combat military personnel have been exposed time and again to toxic chemicals like mustard gas, agent orange and the burn pits in Iraq with devastating long term health effects," **Veterans Outreach Center Executive Director and U.S. Army Veteran Laura Stradley said**. "We applaud Congressman Morelle's efforts to make sure our brave men and women receive the best of care. The passage of the PACT Act is a step in the right direction and absolutely the right thing to do."

The bipartisan, now bicameral, *Honoring our PACT Act* takes action to treat toxic exposure as a cost of war and ensure veterans have access to the healthcare they need to treat medical conditions stemming from such exposure by addressing the full range of issues impacting toxic-exposed veterans'; including access to earned benefits and healthcare through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

This legislation will open up healthcare to over 3.5 million veterans exposed to toxic substances during their military service, including burn pits and airborne hazards. It will create presumptions for 23 respiratory illnesses and cancers, shifting the burden of

proof off our veterans. This means that if a veteran served in a particular theatre at a particular time, they will be presumed to be exposed to toxic substances and therefore potentially eligible for healthcare and benefits. Critically, this legislation will also streamline processes within the Department of Veterans Affairs so that veterans can receive the help and support they need in a timely manner.

For more information, read the full text of the *Honoring our PACT Act* [here](#).

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