

Columbus Office

Vern Riffe Center for Government
77 S. High Street, 11th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215-6111

Phone: (614) 466-8100

Fax: (614) 719-0005

Email: Rep77@ohiohouse.gov

Website: www.ohiohouse.gov



Committees

Ways and Means, Chairman
Energy and Natural Resources
Aging and Long Term Care

Special Appointments

Tax Expenditure Review Committee
Ohio 2020 Tax Policy Study
Commission, Co-Chair
Study Committee on Receivership Laws

Tim Schaffer
State Representative, 77th House District

House Armed Services, Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security Committee
House Concurrent Resolution 21—Sponsor Testimony
Wednesday, January 17, 2018

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Lanese, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the House Armed Services, Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on House Concurrent Resolution 21.

House Concurrent Resolution 21 addresses a critical issue that is affecting a very important group of people, the Atomic Veterans. More specifically those Atomic Veterans who participated in the clean-up process. Because of the importance and secrecy, Atomic Veterans who participated in clean-up efforts have rare challenges, specifically with their healthcare and quality of life. It is time for the United States to recognize their contributions to our country and bring attention to their distinct situation.

During the period of 1972 to 1980, thousands of personnel were sent to the Marshall Islands to clean up previously active nuclear test sites. I have read several testimonies where many of these men and women would perform clean-up duties at or around a nuclear test site without any sort of protective gear. Some said the lack of equipment was due to inadequate funding, others said they were told they were safe to not wear any gear. Some just tied their shirts around their face, while others went to work in a tee shirt, shorts, sandals and no other protective safety gear.

Today these veterans have reports of cancer, birth defects in children, and other documented health effects from exposure to nuclear waste. Shockingly, many of these veterans do not receive the same benefits, which are given to other service members who were involved in active nuclear tests. In 1988, Congress passed the Radiation-Exposed Veterans Compensation Act; however, the veterans that did the cleanup without adequate safety gear were excluded. These Veterans have sacrificed so much for our country, and all the while, they were only doing their job. It is time that the United States stand up for these Veterans.

To address the many challenges this specific sub-group of the Atomic Veterans have faced in regards to health care and quality of life, House Concurrent Resolution 21 will urge Congress to enact the Mark Takai Atomic Veterans Healthcare Parity Act. This Act will address the inequity for these specific veterans in regards to their healthcare; more specifically, it will classify those veterans who participated in the cleanup of Eniwetok Atoll in the Marshall Islands as radiation-exposed veterans. This clarification will provide many clean-up crew veterans with healthcare services and benefits that they are in desperate need to have.

This is why I am before you today, it is important to my constituents and all Atomic Veterans, that the state of Ohio take the lead on this key initiative by sending a message to Congress to enact this critical and significant piece of legislation.

Thank you once again, Chairman Johnson, and the members of the committee, for the opportunity to present this issue to you today. I will be pleased to answer any questions that the committee may have.