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Sponsor Testimony
State Senator Joe Uecker
Senate Concurrent Resolution 11
House State Government Committee
April 20, 2016

Thank you Chairman Maag, Vice Chairwoman Kunze, Ranking Member Slesnick and members of the State Government Committee for the opportunity to speak on behalf of Senate Concurrent Resolution 11.

SCR 11 urges Congress to enact the Toxic Exposure Research Act of 2015 to assist service members and their descendants who are affected by exposure to toxic chemicals during service in the Armed Forces.

The U.S. military used Agent Orange during the Vietnam conflict from 1962 to 1975 to remove leaves from trees that provided cover for enemy forces. This chemical was later linked to the development of certain cancers and other diseases in service members exposed to Agent Orange. Certain birth defects in the children of service members were also attributed to their parent’s exposure to Agent Orange.

During the Persian Gulf War more than 100,000 service members were exposed to toxic chemicals from a plume after an Iraqi ammo dump was destroyed by U.S. forces. Throughout the more recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, troops have been exposed to burn pits, oil fires, and potentially tainted vaccines.

Over the years, progress has been made to deliver benefits, services, and research to those impacted by toxic chemicals. However, work still needs to be done to ensure information is shared and available.

The Toxic Exposure Research Act of 2015 creates a national center for research within the existing framework of the Department of Veterans Affairs. It will focus on the health conditions of service members and their descendants. A newly

created advisory board will inform the department of services that should be developed for descendants or changes in health conditions that impact this population. The Act also establishes a national outreach campaign to disseminate information on exposure rates and the resulting health conditions. The Act directs the Department of Defense to declassify certain information on exposures so that the effects can be more accurately examined.

SCR 11 passed out of the Senate with a unanimous vote in October of last year.

Please join me in standing up for our veterans and their families who sacrificed so much and continue to suffer the wounds of war today. Thank you, I am happy to answer any questions.