



David J. Crawford
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November 4th, 2019

To: Honorable Legislators for the Great State of Ohio

Subject: Testimonial for Endorsement and Passing of Ohio Resolution SCR5 to enact the Mark Takai Atomic Veterans HealthCare Parity Act.

My name is David Crawford. I am the Ohio Commander for the National Association of Atomic Veterans (NAAV). I reside in Tipp City, just north of Dayton. NAAV represents thousands of Atomic Veterans nationwide, many of them here in the great state of Ohio. This testimonial serves as an endorsement supporting passing of Ohio Resolution SCR5 to urge the Congress of the United States to enact the Mark Takai Atomic Veterans Healthcare Parity Act.

I urge the Ohio Legislators to heartily and unanimously pass SCR 5 to support and recognize these Atomic Veterans and urge the US congress to do so as well and provide well deserved and vitally needed benefits.

As a reminder, the US bill under consideration is to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the treatment of veterans who participated in the cleanup of Enewetak Atoll as radiation exposed veterans for purposes of the presumption of service-connection of certain disabilities by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled

SECTION 1.

SHORT TITLE. This Act may be cited as the Mark Takai Atomic Veterans Healthcare Parity Act.

SEC. 2.

TREATMENT OF VETERANS WHO PARTICIPATED IN CLEANUP OF ENEWETAK ATOLL AS RADIATION EXPOSED VETERANS FOR PURPOSES OF PRESUMPTION OF SERVICE-CONNECTION OF CERTAIN DISABILITIES BY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS. Section 1112(c)(3)(B) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new clause:

(v) Cleanup of Enewetak Atoll during the period beginning on January 1, 17 1977, and ending on December 31, 18 1980

HR 1377 IH

A radiological survey of Enewetak was conducted from 1972 to 1973. In 1977, the United States military began decontamination of Enewetak and other islands. During the three-year, \$100 million cleanup process, the military mixed more than 100,000 cubic yards of contaminated soil and debris from the islands with Portland cement and buried it in an atomic blast crater on the northern end of the atoll's Runit Island. The material was placed in the 30 feet deep by 360 foot wide crater created by the May 5, 1958, "Cactus" nuclear weapons test. A dome composed of 358 concrete panels, each 18 inches thick, was constructed over the material. The final cost of the cleanup project was \$239 million. The United States government declared the southern and western islands in the atoll safe for habitation in 1980, and residents of Enewetak returned that same year. The military members who participated in that cleanup mission are suffering from many health issues, but the U.S. Government is refusing to recognize this and provide health coverage and VA benefits.

NAAV was founded in August, 1979 by the late Orville E. Kelly (of Burlington, Iowa) for the purposes of allowing the U. S. Atomic Veteran Community to speak, with a single voice, to their inability to get a fair hearing related to their developing (radiogenic) health issues that may have been precipitated by their exposure to “ionizing” radiation.

NAAV assists disabled and needy atomic veterans, nuclear veterans, members of the U.S Armed Forces, their dependents, the widows and orphans of deceased veterans who were afflicted with radiologic health issues that may have been precipitated by their exposure to “ionizing” radiation while participating in a nuclear weapon test detonation, or a “post-test” event, and then with eventual clean-up and decontamination.

Tens of thousands of soldiers, seaman, and airman were in the trenches, on the ships, and in the air during the testing of over 1,000 nuclear devices (800 underground and 216 open air) on Pacific islands, in the Nevada desert, and elsewhere since the end of World War II and up until cessation of underground testing in 1992. From the beginning, and to date, we continue to pursue our purpose to this dedicated cause.

Atomic Veterans have often paid an unrecognized, ignored, and underappreciated price for their service and sacrifice to our nation. Radiation is invisible and its devastating health effects on the human body are not readily apparent. It takes its toll over the years (often decades) with deadly or debilitating cancers and many other secondary medical issues.

I know this from personal experience. I am currently a DoD certified Atomic Veteran and a VA-rated 100% disabled veteran from my service-connected radiation exposure while working at the Nevada Test Site (NTS). The NTS is where the US tested nearly 1,000 atomic bombs from the 1950s to 1993. Most were underground, but what surprises most people are that there were over a hundred open air bursts before 1962. I have had over 40 operations related to my service connected cancers; including a permanent colostomy from colon cancer, incontinence and ED from prostate cancer treatment and chemotherapy and blood infection induced heart damage resulting in several open heart surgeries and valve replacements.

The bottom line is that Veterans involved in the clean-up and decontamination work at Enewetak Atoll deserve the same level of consideration and benefits (parity) as other veterans, as well as civilians and contractors, currently afforded those under Special Exposure Cohort designations, and for doing similar work at other contaminated facilities.

The Ohio General Assembly should heartily and unanimously pass SCR 5 to support and recognize these Atomic Veterans and urge the US congress to do so as well.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this very important matter.

Regards,

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