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March 23, 2021

The Honorable Thom Tillis
United States Senate
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Tillis:

On behalf of DAV's more than one million members, who have wartime service-related wounds, injuries, diseases, and illnesses, I write to provide our support of your legislation, the Toxic Exposure in the American Military Act.

DAV was proud to work with you last Congress and we look forward to continued collaboration during the 117th Congress, to ensure that veterans exposed to toxic substances during military service, including those who served near open air burn pits, have access to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care and benefits they need and deserve.

Your legislation would extend health care eligibility to all veterans exposed to toxic substances by expanding VA Priority Group 6 to cover veterans eligible for the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry or who received certain medals since the first Persian Gulf War. It further requires the Department of Defense to identify veterans who may have been exposed and makes them eligible as well. In addition, this bill would require VA to enter into a contract with the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine to conduct studies regarding associations between diseases and exposure to toxic substances.

In accordance with DAV Resolution No. 049, adopted at our most recent national convention, which calls for legislation to ensure veterans exposed to toxic and environmental hazards receive all earned benefits and health care, DAV strongly supports the Toxic Exposure in the American Military Act.

Senator Tillis, thank you for your leadership on toxic exposures and your continuing efforts to build consensus for policies and services that will provide meaningful support to veterans harmed by these exposures.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joy J. Ilen', is written over the typed name.

Joy J. Ilen
National Legislative Director

- c. Senator Jon Tester, Chairman, Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
Senator Jerry Moran, Ranking Member, Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee