

VFW Demands Congress Hold VA Accountable for Failure to Grant Benefits to Vietnam, Post 9/11 Veterans Suffering from Toxic Exposures

‘It’s time for Congress to change the framework for providing benefits to individuals who suffer from conditions associated with toxic exposures’

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WASHINGTON – Veterans of Foreign Wars National Commander William “Doc” Schmitz called for “accountability for failure to grant benefits to Vietnam and Post-9/11 veterans suffering from toxic exposures” during a special joint hearing of the Senate and House Veterans’ Affairs Committees today.

The VFW expressed its frustration with the Department of Veterans Affairs’ lack of urgency in providing benefits to individuals who suffer from conditions associated with toxic exposures, especially when there is science to back up veterans’ claims.

“The VFW proposes a permanent, comprehensive, and evidence-based framework of granting presumptive benefits for toxic exposure,” said Schmitz. “Veterans who were exposed to burn pits and now suffer from pulmonary conditions and rare cancers should not have to wait decades for benefits – like Vietnam veterans did.”

The VFW proposed process of granting benefits would require VA to acknowledge the existing research linking these conditions to their service and establish benefits if supported by the science.

“It’s important to ensure veterans who suffer from adverse health conditions related to toxic exposure receive benefits, but acknowledging the science also ensures VA can improve the care that nearly 80 percent of VFW members use and prefer,” said Schmitz.

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Vietnam veterans diagnosed with bladder cancer, Parkinson-like symptoms, hypertension and other conditions that scientists have said are connected to Agent Orange remain without health care and benefits.

“It’s unacceptable that the list of conditions presumed to be associated with Agent Orange exposure does not include bladder cancer, Parkinson-like symptoms, hypertension, and other conditions that scientists have said are connected to military service,” said Schmitz. “The VA keeps making excuses for not acknowledging it. As a Vietnam veteran, I will not sit idle as my comrades struggle to survive without the care and compensation they deserve.”

Schmitz reminded committee members that the VFW has led or played a major role in every reform or expansion of veterans benefits since the institution of the VA.

Video of today’s testimony is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHh65cbFpFQ> and the written version can be accessed [here](#).