

Weigh Your Options

Everything you need to know about recent Camp Lejeune lawsuits

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VFW encourages Camp Lejeune veterans to evaluate if they want to participate in recent lawsuits.

The new Honoring Our PACT Act law is omnibus legislation that includes the Camp Lejeune Justice Act. The section of the law states people who drank or used contaminated water for at least 30 days between Aug. 1, 1953, and Dec. 31, 1987, at the North Carolina Marine Corps base can file lawsuits to obtain relief for harm caused by contaminated water.

It is unclear what government entity someone needs to sue to recover damages. Because of this, VFW urges Camp Lejeune veterans and families to contact a VA-accredited VFW service officer before making any decisions about joining a Camp Lejeune contaminated water lawsuit.

VFW's concern is that veterans may rush into making a decision that may cost them VA disability pay and health care.

A part of the legislation, the Camp Lejeune Justice Act has an offset provision stating that any amount awarded from a case will cause a suspension, or offset, of any VA disability pay, VA health care or other federal benefits, such as Medicare or Medicaid. The suspension of benefits will take place until the amount of any money that was used to file a suit is paid in full.

However, people who are a part of those lawsuits can remove themselves from the lawsuit before a judgment is made.

VFW also encourages all veterans who participated in eligible operations to join the VA's Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry, at www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/burnpits/registry.asp. Veterans of the following operations are eligible to apply.

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- Operation Desert Storm
- Operation Desert Shield
- Operation New Dawn
- Operation Iraqi Freedom
- Operation Enduring Freedom

Camp Lejeune veterans can get help from more than 2,000 VA-accredited VFW service representatives located across the country and overseas. The free service is available to all veterans, even for non-VFW members. Visit [vfw.org/ServiceOfficers](https://www.vfw.org/ServiceOfficers) to locate a VA-accredited VFW service officer near you.