

**NINETY-SIXTH NATIONAL CONVENTION
OF
THE AMERICAN LEGION
Charlotte, North Carolina
August 26, 27, 28, 2014**

Resolution No. 125: Environmental Exposures

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

(As amended)

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long been at the forefront of advocacy for veterans exposed to environmental hazards such as Agent Orange, Gulf War-related hazards, ionizing radiation and the various chemicals and agents used during Project Shipboard Hazard and Defense; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense's disclosure of information regarding various potential hazardous exposures and the current advancement of scientific research continue to reveal new potential environmental threats to service members on an ongoing basis; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs was congressionally mandated by Public Law 102-4 (1991) to contract with the National Academy of Sciences to review existing peer-reviewed research on herbicides, to include their components, exposure and medical evidence on related health effects; and

WHEREAS, In the last several years new concerns have been raised regarding contamination of stateside and international military installations and locations such as, but not limited to: groundwater contamination at Camp Lejeune, NC; environmental contaminants at Gagetown, New Brunswick located in Canada; Fort Drum, NY; Fort Dugway, UT; post-hostility Vietnam; and Fort McClellan, AL; and

WHEREAS, Major overseas situations regarding exposures such as sodium dichromate in a water treatment facility in Qarmat Ali, Iraq, toxic exposures at the Naval Air Facility in Atsugi, Japan, dioxins and other contaminants at Johnston Atoll, and others; and

WHEREAS, On October 31, 2011, the Institute of Medicine released a report on the long-term health consequences from exposure to burn pits in Iraq and Afghanistan, and currently determined that there is insufficient evidence at this point, but recommended further longitudinal studies over time from to deployment the Joint Base Balad over many years to determine incidences of chronic diseases; and

WHEREAS, The importance of developing a comprehensive policy that allows for maximum flexibility to respond to new research as it becomes apparent in the timeliest and most proactive manner possible is recognized; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion's comprehensive policy on environmental exposures be an all inclusive policy recognizing the traditions of previous advocacy on behalf of veterans exposed to environmental hazards; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the Department of Defense (DoD) to provide a full disclosure of all wartime and non-wartime locations to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) where hazardous environmental exposures exist and that armed forces members were exposed through testing, transportation, storage, disposal, and environmental contamination; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to enact legislation requiring the VA to establish a national center for the research on the diagnosis and treatment of health conditions of the descendants of individuals exposed to toxic substances during service in the Armed Forces and establish an advisory board, responsible for advising the national center, determining health conditions that result from toxic exposure and to study and evaluate cases of exposure; and be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the VA to expeditiously conduct peer reviews and scientific investigations through the National Academy of Sciences within the Institute of Medicine on all locations provided by the DoD; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That veterans reporting to VA medical care facilities claiming exposure to such environmental hazards be provided examinations and treatment which are thorough and appropriate, and that VA physicians demonstrate compassion in responding to the medical needs of these veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion vigorously advocate for the liberalization of the rules relating to the evaluation of studies involving exposure to any environmental hazard and that all necessary action be taken by the federal government, both administratively and legislatively as appropriate, to ensure that veterans are properly compensated for diseases and other disabilities scientifically associated with a particular exposure; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue to closely monitor the development of all ongoing research on the long-term effects of all environmental exposures and point out to the proper officials any perceived deficiencies or discrepancies in these projects; and to ensure that government committees charged with review of such research are composed of impartial members of the medical and scientific community; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion will continue to consult with medical experts in order to ensure the effectiveness of its advocacy.