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American Legion backs VA on disability claims on toxic waste exposure

WASHINGTON (January 13, 2017) – The leader of the nation’s largest veterans organization expressed appreciation Friday after the Department of Veterans Affairs announced a decision to provide disability benefits to veterans suffering from eight deadly diseases connected to water contamination at Camp Lejeune, N.C.

“Veterans have waited long enough for treatment and proper care in the area of environmental health,” American Legion National Commander Charles E. Schmidt said. “Those who have served at Camp Lejeune and are now suffering from illnesses linked to contamination cannot be left to confront these diseases as if they were not in any way connected to their time on base. We are here to see this does not happen.”

Groundwater contamination at Camp Lejeune was stated specifically in American Legion Resolution No. 118, passed unanimously by delegates at the 98th National Convention in Cincinnati, calling for expanded research and quick, compassionate care for veterans suffering from exposure to other environmental hazards. The resolution also calls on Congress to establish a national center for research on the diagnosis and treatment of health conditions of veterans, as well as their descendants, exposed to toxic substances during military service and an advisory board on exposure to toxic substances.

Eligible to apply for benefits based on toxic water exposure include those on active duty, reserve and National Guard status serving at Camp Lejeune for a minimum of 30 days (cumulative) between Aug. 1, 1953, and Dec. 31, 1987, and are diagnosed with any of the following conditions: adult leukemia; aplastic anemia and other myelodysplastic syndromes; cancer of the bladder, kidneys or liver, multiple myeloma; non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma and Parkinson’s disease.

With a current membership of 2.2 million wartime veterans, The American Legion, www.legion.org, was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national security, veterans affairs, Americanism, and youth programs. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through more than 13,000 posts across the nation.

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