The American Legion

★ WASHINGTON OFFICE ★ 1608 "K" STREET, N.W. ★ WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006 ★
(202) 861-2700 ★

OFFICE OF THE
NATIONAL COMMANDER

November 6, 2017

Honorable Mac Thornberry, Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
2126 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Thornberry:

On behalf of the 2 million members of The American Legion, I urge you to ensure that Sec. 11008 of the Senate-passed FY 2018 National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 2810) remains in the final enacted version. Sec. 11008 would establish a center of excellence to better understand the health effects associated with burn pits and treat veterans who become sick after exposure.

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 military service. 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 to determine incidences of chronic diseases.

Through Resolution No. 118: *Environmental Exposures*, passed at the 2016 National Convention, "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." In that vein, The American Legion supports legislation to create a center of excellence that would help in the prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, treatment, and rehabilitation of health conditions related to burn pit exposure.

The American Legion applauds your leadership and urge you to adopt this provision in the NDAA conference report.

Sincerely,

Denise H. Rohan

DENISE H. ROHAN
National Commander

C: Ranking Member Smith, House Armed Services Committee
Chairman McCain, Senate Armed Services Committee
Ranking Member Reed, Senate Armed Services Committee