

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 26, 2009

The Honorable Ray Mabus
Secretary
Department of the Navy
1000 Navy Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20350-1000

Dear Secretary Mabus:

We wish to express to you our disappointment and frustration that the question of how to assist the former military and civilian personnel who served at Camp Lejeune and were exposed to highly contaminated drinking water between the years of 1958 through 1987 remains unanswered. We strongly urge you to fulfill your obligation to the military and civilian personnel as well as their families who have suffered from water contamination at Camp Lejeune.

There is a growing body of evidence that requires the Navy to begin developing a strategy to provide for those who have suffered from the effects of exposure to drinking water contaminated with volatile organic compounds such as trichloroethylene (TCE), tetrachloroethylene (PCE), toluene, ethylbenzene, xylene, vinyl chloride, and benzene at Camp Lejeune. One point, on which everyone agrees with the National Research Council (NRC) report, is their statement that the Navy should not wait for additional studies before making a decision on how to proceed. There is increasing consensus among agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Toxicology Program at the National Institutes of Health, and the International Agency for Research on Cancer, that PCE, TCE, and DCE are reasonably anticipated to be human carcinogens. Benzene and vinyl chloride are already classified as a "known human carcinogens". Previous and ongoing water modeling studies being conducted by the Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry (ATSDR) are helping to determine average monthly estimates of chemical levels in water systems at Camp Lejeune.

We may never have enough evidence to determine with 100 percent certainty the health effects of each individual's exposure to contaminated water dating back to 1958. However, there is more than enough evidence regarding exposures to contaminated drinking water, and knowledge of the health effects of contaminants present at Lejeune, to establish a framework for assisting the victims of contaminated water from Camp Lejeune. To maintain that a threshold of 100 percent certainty is required before establishing such a framework is irresponsible and ignores the problems former military and civilian personnel from Camp Lejeune face.

Further studies, such as those tasked to the ATSDR as required by the Defense Authorization Act of 2008, are important and should continue to supplement and expand the Department of the Navy's understanding of how to assist those who suffer health complications from Camp Lejeune. ATSDR's work could increase the understanding of additional health problems that occur in the children of former residents of Camp Lejeune, provide a better epidemiological understanding of the overall health effects that occur from exposure to contaminated drinking water, and provide a clearer picture of individual exposures at Tarawa Terrace, Holcomb Blvd., and Hadnot Point. The Department of the Navy can adapt its policies to reflect that new information arising from these studies, and we strongly urge the continuation of ATSDR's statutorily required work.

There should be no further delay in beginning to address the health problems exhibited by former Camp Lejeune personnel. Any further deference to studying the issue before starting this process is unjustified. Furthermore, a blanket denial of claims would be premature, and a preemption of justice. The health problems encountered by former residents of Camp Lejeune are real and must be dealt with expeditiously. Failure to act falls short of your responsibility to provide for those that fought to defend our country.

Given the recommendation of the NRC and current needs of former Lejeune personnel and their families, we request answers to the following questions:

- 1) How many more studies does the Department of Navy plan on commissioning before developing a strategy to address the health effects of exposure to contaminated drinking water, once the current studies proposed, or in progress, by ATSDR are complete?
- 2) By what date can our men and women in uniform, who so valiantly served the United States, anticipate an answer from the Department of Navy about how their and their families' health issues resulting from exposure to contaminants will be addressed?

This toxic legacy cannot be allowed to persist by studying it in perpetuity. We urge you to act now and await your prompt reply.

Sincerely,


Rep. Bart Stupak Rep. John Dingell Rep. Brad Miller

CC: Howard Frumkin, Director, National Center for Environmental Health/
Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

Jim Moran

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~~Handwritten signature~~

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