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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 22, 2017

The Honorable David J. Shulkin
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shulkin,

We are writing you today to call on the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide a response to the recommendations made by the National Academy of Medicine's (NAM) *Veterans and Agent Orange, Update 2014*, regarding the association between Agent Orange exposure and Bladder Cancer, Hyperthyroidism, and Parkinson-like conditions.

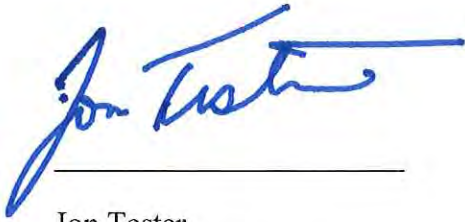
In March of 2016, the National Academy of Science released *Veterans and Agent Orange: Update 2014*, and under PL 102-4 the Secretary was required to take action on NAM recommendations within 60 days of receiving the report. Even though VA is no longer required to act within that timeframe, then Secretary McDonald said a response from VA's Agent Orange working group was imminent. The veterans suffering from these conditions are still in urgent need of critical health care and other benefits.

In November of 2016, VA once again stalled their response to the NAM recommendations leaving the final decision for proposing new rules and new presumptions to the incoming administration. In response to inquiries made by the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs in February VA expressed that it completed internal reviews of the NAM recommendations and provided their own recommendations to the Secretary for review. When the Committee inquired again in June, VA said the decision was with the Secretary for review. As of this letter, a decision has not been made publically on these outstanding recommendations 19 months after NAM released their report. The care owed to our servicemembers should not be delayed and denied any longer. They fought for our country, were exposed to a toxic chemical while carrying out their daily duty, and in return, we are failing to provide medical care and disability compensation.

We urge VA to act on these recommendations and extend presumption for service connection for Bladder Cancer, Hyperthyroidism, and Parkinson-like conditions, in keeping with the recommendations made by NAM.

We thank you for your attention to this vital issue, and we look forward to working with you to resolve this matter promptly.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester
United States Senate



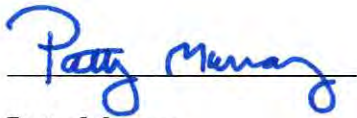
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