



Lobbying Congress

Please click on this link to download the letter to your legislator.

<http://www.burnpits360.org/Letters-To-Legislators.html>

1. Identify your three Members of Congress (MoCs): two Senators and one Representative.
2. Research your MoCs. Where do they stand on burn pits? Have they co-sponsored the Helping Veterans Exposed to Burn Pits Act (S. 319 or H.R. 1279)? Have they made public statements about the issue?
3. Are your MoCs on an important committee to this issue, such as Armed Services or Veterans Affairs?
4. Review the Issue Brief and think about what you most want your MoCs to know about this issue.

MAKING THE CALL: Remember the ABCs: Accurate, Brief, and Courteous

1. Call the Congressional switchboard and ask for your first MoC's office:
(202)224-3121
2. When you're connected with your MoC's office, ask for the staffer that handles

veterans' affairs issues. You may have to leave a message for that person.

3. Briefly introduce yourself, and where you live, to make sure you know you are their constituent.

4. Explain that you are calling about the issue of health care and benefits for veterans suffering toxic exposures from open air burn pits.

5. Tell them your connection to this issue – are you an impacted veteran? Are you a family member? Briefly explain.

6. "Thank you:" express gratitude for something the MoC has done. (This could be something they've done on burn pits, or anything else).

7. Make the ask: Tell the staffer that you would like the MoC to:

1) Publicly go on record drawing attention to the dangers of burn pits and the need for exposed veterans to receive specialized health care and benefits.

2) Send a letter to the SVAC, HVAC and Armed Services Committees, ask for a public hearing to investigate the issue and allow impacted veterans to testify.

3) If they haven't yet, co-sponsor the Helping Veterans Exposed to Burn Pits Act (S. 319 or S. 1279)

4) Send a letter to VA Secretary Shulkin, urging him to revise the VA disability criteria to address the respiratory issues faced by Veterans with Deployment-Related Lung disease already acknowledged and compensated by the Social Security Administration.

5. Conclusion: Thank the staffer for their time, and tell them you will be following up on the MoC's actions on this issue.

6. Repeat with your other two MoC's!

THE FOLLOW-UP: [Develop a Relationship](#)

1. Publicly thank the official: If the elected official takes the requested action, thank him or her publicly, with a letter to the editor or via social media.
2. Do follow-up actions: Letter writing, phone calls, letters to the editor, community education sessions, vigils or social media help thank the official or urge him or her to take action.
3. Contact the office next time the issue comes up: Provide new information and your stance.
4. Continue to build a relationship with an elected official or staff person

WHITE HOUSE VETERANS HOTLINE

After you've called your three Members of Congress, be sure to dial the new White House Veterans Hotline: 855-948-2311

This hotline is a new resource that was launched to hear personal complaints from veterans regarding VA-related issues. The line is staffed by VA employees from Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. EST.

They have stated that their goal is to respond to all inquiries within 14 business days after the phone call (with certain emergency exceptions that require shorter response times).

If you are an impacted veteran who is having difficulty acquiring health care and benefits as a result of your toxic exposures by burn pits, call this hotline and tell them your story and the obstacles you are facing.

Be sure to share notes from your phone calls with us at burnpitadvocates@burnpits360.org so Burn Pits 360 can track the success of your lobbying and support your follow-up!