



United States  
of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 109<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2005

## *House of Representatives*

# RECOGNITION OF ATOMIC AND DEPLETED URANIUM VETERANS!

**HON. BOB FILNER**

OF CALIFORNIA  
IN THE HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. Speaker, I urge support for two bills I have just introduced, H.R. 4183, the "Recognition of Forgotten Atomic Veterans and their Surviving Spouses Act" and "H.R. 4184, the "You Were There, You Get Care Act."

In the preparation of these bills, I am indebted to Earl J. Lee, member of the National Association of Atomic Veterans (NAAV) and National District VI Chairman of the AMVETS RECA (Radiation Exposure Compensation Act) Program. Resolutions supporting the provisions in these bills have been passed by the National AMVETS.

For too long, many Atomic Veterans and veterans exposed to Depleted Uranium have been on the outside looking in and wondering why? Were they not loyal and faithful in their military service? Do they not deserve compensation or care for their illnesses?

H.R. 4183, the "Recognition of Forgotten Atomic Veterans and their Surviving Spouses Act", directs the Department of Justice to obtain the records of all Atomic Veterans from the Department of Energy Operations Office in Nevada. Using these records, they are to locate and advise all veterans or their surviving widows of their rights under RECA and guide them in filing a claim for the compensation that is due them.

RECA is the program passed by Congress in 1990 (P.L. 101-426) that provides compassionate

payments to individuals who contract cancers and other serious diseases as a result of their exposure to radiation from above ground tests of nuclear weapons or from employment in underground uranium mines.

Because the VA did not provide medical care to Atomic Veterans in many cases, many died at an early age. So there are thousands of widows, many on fixed incomes, who have never heard of RECA and do not know that they may be eligible for compensation. My bill will help them apply and receive substantial compassionate payments to ease their burden.

Depleted uranium is an incredibly effective weapon, but its residue has a half-life of 4 billion years and many believe that it is a carcinogen. We simply cannot allow another generation of veterans to be treated as were the Atomic Veterans! H.R. 4184, the "You Were There, You Get Care Act", ensures that veterans who served in the 1991 Gulf War and subsequent conflicts will be considered "service-connected disabled" for any illnesses currently covered by RECA and other diseases found by the Veterans' Affairs Secretary to result from DU exposure.

For example, veterans serving in the 1991 Gulf War or those providing clean-up or servicing of vehicles or equipment that had been in the Persian Gulf, shall be considered as exposed and if they are ill, their

illnesses shall be deemed “service-connected” with the accompanying VA health care and VA compensation provided.

In addition, this bill calls for an in-depth medical study to be conducted by independent civilian medical entities, independent of the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs, to determine other diseases that may result from exposure to depleted uranium. A copy of the study will be sent to the Senate and House Veterans’ Affairs Committees.

We need to ensure that veterans from the Gulf War and all wars waged since will not die an early and painful death without the health care and compensation they need and deserve.

Taken together, H.R. 4183, and H.R. 4184 makes a bold statement—that when young men and women volunteer for service, they can count on their government to compensate them and care for them if their service lends to illnesses. These assurances are so important and so necessary and should aid in the recruitment and retention of military personnel.