

114TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 2237

To direct the Secretary of Veterans to establish within the Department of Veterans Affairs a center of excellence in the prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, treatment, and rehabilitation of health conditions relating to exposure to burn pits.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 5, 2015

Ms. ESTY (for herself and Mr. McDERMOTT) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and in addition to the Committee on Armed Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

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## A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Veterans to establish within the Department of Veterans Affairs a center of excellence in the prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, treatment, and rehabilitation of health conditions relating to exposure to burn pits.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Helping Veterans Ex-  
5 posed to Burn Pits Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN PREVENTION, DIAG-**  
2 **NOSIS, MITIGATION, TREATMENT, AND REHA-**  
3 **BILITATION OF HEALTH CONDITIONS RELAT-**  
4 **ING TO EXPOSURE TO BURN PITS AND OTHER**  
5 **ENVIRONMENTAL EXPOSURES.**

6 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of Veterans  
7 Affairs shall establish within the Department of Veterans  
8 Affairs a center of excellence in the prevention, diagnosis,  
9 mitigation, treatment, and rehabilitation of health condi-  
10 tions relating to exposure to burn pits and other environ-  
11 mental exposures to carry out the responsibilities specified  
12 in subsection (d). Such center shall be established using—

13 (1) the directives, policies, and Comptroller  
14 General and Inspector General recommendations in  
15 effect as of the date of the enactment of this Act;  
16 and

17 (2) guidance issued pursuant to section 313 of  
18 the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal  
19 Year 2013 (Public Law 112–239; 126 Stat. 1692;  
20 10 U.S.C. 1074 note).

21 (b) SELECTION OF SITES.—In selecting the site for  
22 the center of excellence established under subsection (a),  
23 the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall consider entities  
24 that—

25 (1) are equipped with the specialized equipment  
26 needed to study, diagnose, and treat health condi-

1 tions relating to exposure to burn pits and other en-  
2 vironmental exposures;

3 (2) have a publication track record of post-de-  
4 ployment health exposures among veterans who  
5 served in the Armed Forces in support of Operation  
6 Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom;

7 (3) have collaborated with a geosciences depart-  
8 ment that has a medical geology division;

9 (4) have developed animal models and in vitro  
10 models of dust immunology and lung injury con-  
11 sistent with the injuries of members of the Armed  
12 Forces who served in support of Operation Iraqi  
13 Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom; and

14 (5) have expertise in allergy and immunology,  
15 pulmonary diseases, and industrial and management  
16 engineering.

17 (c) COLLABORATION.—The Secretary shall ensure  
18 that the center of excellence collaborates, to the maximum  
19 extent practicable, with the Secretary of Defense, institu-  
20 tions of higher education, and other appropriate public  
21 and private entities (including international entities) to  
22 carry out the responsibilities specified in subsection (d).

23 (d) RESPONSIBILITIES.—The center of excellence  
24 shall have the following responsibilities:

1           (1) To provide for the development, testing, and  
2           dissemination within the Department of Veterans  
3           Affairs of best practices for the treatment of health  
4           conditions relating to exposure to burn pits and  
5           other environmental exposures.

6           (2) To provide guidance for the health system  
7           of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the De-  
8           partment of Defense in determining the personnel  
9           required to provide quality health care for members  
10          of the Armed Forces and veterans with health condi-  
11          tions relating to exposure to burn pits and other en-  
12          vironmental exposures.

13          (3) To establish, implement, and oversee a com-  
14          prehensive program to train health professionals of  
15          the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Depart-  
16          ment of Defense in the treatment of health condi-  
17          tions relating to exposure to burn pits and other en-  
18          vironmental exposures.

19          (4) To facilitate advancements in the study of  
20          the short-term and long-term effects of exposure to  
21          burn pits and other environmental exposures.

22          (5) To disseminate within the military medical  
23          treatment facilities of the Department of Veterans  
24          Affairs best practices for training health profes-  
25          sionals with respect to health conditions relating to

1 exposure to burn pits and other environmental expo-  
2 sures.

3 (6) To conduct basic science and translational  
4 research on health conditions relating to exposure to  
5 burn pits and other environmental exposures for the  
6 purposes of understanding the etiology of such con-  
7 ditions and developing preventive interventions and  
8 new treatments.

9 (7) To provide medical treatment to all veterans  
10 identified as part of the burn pits registry estab-  
11 lished under section 201 of the Dignified Burial and  
12 Other Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 2012  
13 (Public Law 112–260; 38 U.S.C. 527 note).

14 (e) USE OF BURN PITS REGISTRY DATA.—In car-  
15 rying out its responsibilities under subsection (d), the cen-  
16 ter shall have access to and make use of the data accumu-  
17 lated by the burn pits registry established under section  
18 201 of the Dignified Burial and Other Veterans' Benefits  
19 Improvement Act of 2012 (Public Law 112–260; 38  
20 U.S.C. 527 note).

21 (f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

22 (1) The term “burn pit” means an area of land  
23 located in Afghanistan or Iraq that—

1 (A) is designated by the Secretary of De-  
2 fense to be used for disposing solid waste by  
3 burning in the outdoor air; and

4 (B) does not contain a commercially manu-  
5 factured incinerator or other equipment specifi-  
6 cally designed and manufactured for the burn-  
7 ing of solid waste.

8 (2) The term “other environmental exposures”  
9 means exposure to environmental hazards, including  
10 burn pits, dust or sand, hazardous materials, and  
11 waste at any site in Afghanistan or Iraq that emits  
12 smoke containing pollutants present in the environ-  
13 ment or smoke from fires or explosions.

14 (g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is  
15 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section  
16 \$30,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2016 through 2021.

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