

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 3, 2017

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump,

We write today to urge you to honor a group of brave Americans who have been neglected and ignored for far too long: the Atomic Veterans. Specifically, we request that you issue through executive order a service medal to this group of veterans or their surviving family members in honor of their service and sacrifice to our nation.

Between 1945 and 1962, about 225,000 members of our Armed Forces participated in hundreds of atmospheric nuclear weapons tests. These GIs became known as the Atomic Veterans. They were placed in extremely dangerous areas and constantly exposed to radiation in performance of their duties. Sworn to secrecy, they could not even speak of their service to their doctors.

Atomic Veterans have been recognized, identified and acknowledged as a discrete cohort of American veterans. U.S. code defines Atomic Veterans as members of our Armed Forces who participated in above-ground nuclear weapons testing; were part of the U.S. military occupation forces in or around Hiroshima and Nagasaki before 1946; or were held as POWs in or near Hiroshima or Nagasaki.

Beyond identifying this group of veterans, past administrations and congresses have recognized the Atomic Veterans' valiant service, and acted to provide specialized care and compensation for their harrowing duty. Atomic Veterans have been identified by the Department of Justice for compensation under the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act of 1990; recognized as eligible for specialized testing and treatment by the Department of Veterans' Affairs; featured in a chapter of the landmark Advisory Committee on Human Radiation Experiments (ACHRE) report; and publicly acknowledged in the apology issued by President Clinton on October 3, 1995 upon release of the ACHRE final report.

In 2007, our allies Great Britain, New Zealand and Australia enacted their versions of the Atomic Veterans Medal Act, in which a special medal was authorized to honor their Atomic Veterans who served with the United States. Russia and Canada have followed suit, recognizing their Atomic Veterans. Regrettably, the Pentagon has remained silent on honoring their service, arguing that to do so would require the DOD to issue similar medals to any and all military personnel who undertake hazardous duties, including first responders, medical personnel and firemen. We feel that this is an inaccurate comparison and an unacceptable excuse.

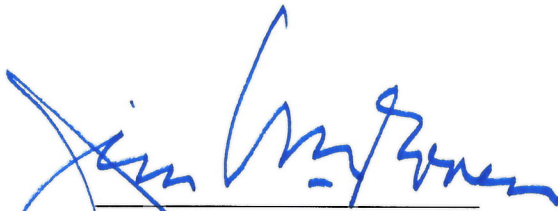
The entire House of Representatives agrees that our Atomic Veterans should be honored with a medal. An amendment to create an Atomic Veterans Service Medal has been included in the House National Defense Authorization Act for the past three years. Most recently, on July 14th, this amendment passed the House by a resounding vote of 424 – 0. Despite widespread support

in the House of Representatives, however, this provision has been stripped from the final bill each time during Conference Report negotiations.

As you know, the President has the authority to issue through executive order this sort of service medal. Past examples include: the Medal of Freedom (EO 9586, July 6, 1945), the Humanitarian Service Medal (EO 11965, January 19, 1977), the Armed Services Medal (EO 12985, January 11, 1996), the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal (EO 13289, March 12, 2003), and the National Service Medal (EO 10431, October 2, 2015).

More than 75 percent of Atomic Veterans have already passed away, never having received this recognition. Past administrations and congresses have dealt with the thornier issues of legality and compensation related to Atomic Veterans. What remains is recognizing these veterans' duty, honor and faithful service to our nation. With time running out, we strongly urge you to consider authorizing through executive order the Atomic Veterans Service Medal.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Sincerely,



Tom Emmer
Member of Congress

CC: Secretary Mattis, Secretary Shulkin