



Fairly Assessing Service-related Toxic Exposure Residuals (FASTER) Presumptions Act

Congressman David Trone (D-MD)

Background

Our service members put our country's safety before their own, including by risking exposure to toxic substances. Every day, more veterans speak out about their exposure to environmental hazards and other toxic substances during military service, including contaminated water at military bases from per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and other toxins, airborne hazards from burn pits and other sources while serving abroad, and radiation from atomic testing and cleanups. The health impacts of these incidents can vary from unexplained chronic multisymptom illnesses to cancers, birth defects, infertility, and respiratory conditions.

The cumbersome disability benefit claim process can be a barrier to care for veterans suffering the long-term effects of exposure to toxic substances. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has had the ability to streamline this process through presumptions but has failed to take timely action in many instances.

About the Legislation

The Fairly Assessing Service-related Toxic Exposure Residuals (FASTER) Presumptions Act would help impacted veterans access earned benefits by removing the obstacles currently in place and creating a more efficient and effective system. The FASTER Presumptions Act would streamline VA's process and provide timelines for establishing presumptions for toxic exposures by creating a new review process with a Formal Advisory Committee, an independent Science Review Board, and a Working Group to support faster decisions. The bill would improve data collection between VA and the Department of Defense, commission studies related to veterans who served in Southwest Asia, and establish an expert advisory panel for constrictive bronchiolitis. And, the FASTER Presumptions Act would require VA to provide training to improve claims adjudications, helping our veterans access the resources they deserve.