H. R. 7684

To require the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to evaluate members of the Armed Forces and veterans who have tested positive for a virus certified as a pandemic for potential exposure to open burn pits and toxic airborne chemicals or other airborne contaminants, to conduct a study on the impact of such a pandemic on members and veterans with such exposure, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 20, 2020

Mr. GOLDEN 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.

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to evaluate members of the Armed Forces and veterans who have tested positive for a virus certified as a pandemic for potential exposure to open burn pits and toxic airborne chemicals or other airborne contaminants, to conduct a study on the impact of such a pandemic on members and veterans with such exposure, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-

tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,
SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.
This Act may be cited as the “Pandemic Care for Burn Pits Exposure Act of 2020”.

SEC. 2. EXPOSURE TO OPEN BURN PITS AND TOXIC AIRBORNE CHEMICALS OR OTHER AIRBORNE CONTAMINANTS AS PART OF HEALTH ASSESSMENTS FOR MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES AND VETERANS DURING A PANDEMIC AND INCLUSION OF INFORMATION IN REGISTRY.

(a) HEALTH ASSESSMENT.—The Secretary of Defense and Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall ensure that the first health assessment conducted for a member of the Armed Forces or veteran after the individual tested positive for a virus certified by the Federal Government as a pandemic includes an evaluation of whether the individual has been—

(1) based or stationed at a location where an open burn pit was used; or

(2) exposed to toxic airborne chemicals or other airborne contaminants relating to service in the Armed Forces, including an evaluation of any information recorded as part of the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry.

(b) INCLUSION OF INDIVIDUALS IN REGISTRY.—If an evaluation conducted under subsection (a) with respect to
an individual establishes that the individual was based or stationed at a location where an open burn pit was used, or that the individual was exposed to toxic airborne chemicals or other airborne contaminants, the individual shall be enrolled in the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry unless the member elects to not enroll in such registry.

(c) Rule of Construction.—Nothing in this section may be construed to preclude eligibility of a veteran for benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs by reason of the history of exposure of the veteran to an open burn pit not being recorded in an evaluation conducted under subsection (a).

(d) Definitions.—In this section:

(1) Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry.—The term “Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry” means the registry established by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs under section 201 of the Dignified Burial and Other Veterans’ Benefits Improvement Act of 2012 (Public Law 112–260; 38 U.S.C. 527 note).

(2) Open Burn Pit.—The term “open burn pit” has the meaning given that term in section 201(c) of the Dignified Burial and Other Veterans’

SEC. 3. STUDY ON IMPACT OF VIRAL PANDEMICS ON MEMBERS OF ARMED FORCES AND VETERANS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED TOXIC EXPOSURE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall conduct a study, through the Airborne Hazards and Burn Pits Center of Excellence (in this section referred to as the “Center”), on the health impacts of infection with a virus designated as a global pandemic, including a coronavirus, to members of the Armed Forces and veterans who have been exposed to open burn pits and other toxic exposures for the purposes of understanding the health impacts of the virus and whether individuals infected with the virus are at increased risk of severe symptoms due to previous conditions linked to toxic exposure.

(b) PREPARATION FOR FUTURE PANDEMIC.—The Secretary, through the Center, shall analyze potential lessons learned through the study conducted under subsection (a) to assist in preparing the Department of Veterans Affairs for potential future pandemics.

(c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) CORONAVIRUS.—The term “coronavirus” has the meaning given that term in section 506 of the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supple-
mental Appropriations Act, 2020 (Public Law 116–
123).

(2) OPEN BURN PIT.—The term “open burn
pit” has the meaning given that term in section
201(c) of the Dignified Burial and Other Veterans’
Benefits Improvement Act of 2012 (Public Law