

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 8524

To amend title 5, United States Code, to improve access to workers' compensation for civilian Federal employees exposed to toxic burn pits, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 27, 2026

Ms. POU (for herself, Mr. FITZPATRICK, and Ms. MALOY) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Workforce

A BILL

To amend title 5, United States Code, to improve access to workers' compensation for civilian Federal employees exposed to toxic burn pits, and for other purposes.

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 “Kenya Merritt Renew-
5 ing our Promise to Address Chemical Toxicity Act of
6 2026” or the “Kenya Merritt Renewing our PACT Act
7 of 2026”.

1 **SEC. 2. CERTAIN DISEASES DEEMED TO BE PROXIMATELY**
2 **CAUSED BY EMPLOYMENT FOR FEDERAL EM-**
3 **PLOYEES EXPOSED TO TOXIC BURN PITS.**

4 (a) ESTABLISHMENT OF PRESUMPTION.—Sub-
5 chapter I of chapter 81 of title 5, United States Code,
6 is amended by inserting after section 8143b the following:

7 **“§ 8143c. Employees exposed to burn pits and toxic**
8 **hazards in foreign contingency oper-**
9 **ations**

10 “(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

11 “(1) CONTINGENCY OPERATION.—The term
12 ‘contingency operation’ has the meaning given the
13 term in section 101 of title 10.

14 “(2) ELIGIBLE EMPLOYEE.—The term ‘eligible
15 employee’ means an employee of the Department of
16 Justice, the Department of State, the Department of
17 Defense, the Department of the Treasury, the De-
18 partment of Agriculture, the Department of Com-
19 merce, the Department of Homeland Security, or an
20 element of the intelligence community, or a Federal
21 law enforcement officer, who, on or after August 2,
22 1990, carried out the job responsibilities of that em-
23 ployee for not fewer than 30 total days in a country
24 or territory while the United States was conducting
25 a contingency operation in that country or territory.

1 “(3) FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER.—

2 The term ‘Federal law enforcement officer’ has the
3 meaning given to the term in section 2 of the Law
4 Enforcement Congressional Badge of Bravery Act of
5 2008 (34 U.S.C. 50301).

6 “(4) INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY.—The term
7 ‘intelligence community’ has the meaning given the
8 term in section 3 of the National Security Act of
9 1947 (50 U.S.C. 3003).

10 “(5) OPEN BURN PIT.—The term ‘open burn
11 pit’ has the meaning given the term in section
12 201(c) of the Dignified Burial and Other Veterans’
13 Benefits Improvement Act of 2012 (38 U.S.C. 527
14 note).

15 “(b) PRESUMPTION OF EMPLOYMENT CONNECTION
16 FOR CERTAIN DISEASES ASSOCIATED WITH EXPOSURE
17 TO BURN PITS AND OTHER TOXINS.—For a claim under
18 this subchapter of disability or death of an eligible em-
19 ployee, a disease specified on the list established under
20 subsection (c), as updated under that subsection, shall be
21 deemed to have been incurred in or aggravated during the
22 employment of that eligible employee, notwithstanding
23 that there is no record of evidence of such disease during
24 the period of such employment.

1 “(c) LIST OF DISEASES DEEMED PROXIMATELY
2 CAUSED BY EMPLOYMENT.—

3 “(1) ESTABLISHMENT OF INITIAL LIST.—There
4 is established under this section a list of diseases
5 that aligns with the diseases specified in section
6 1120(b) of title 38, including all diseases with re-
7 spect to which the Secretary of Veterans Affairs pre-
8 scribed regulations in the manner described in para-
9 graph (15) of such section 1120(b) before the date
10 of enactment of this section.

11 “(2) ADDITIONS TO LIST.—

12 “(A) LIMITATION.—On and after the date
13 of enactment of this section, a disease may not
14 be added to the list established under para-
15 graph (1) unless the Secretary of Veterans Af-
16 fairs adds that disease to the list under section
17 1120(b) of title 38 pursuant to regulations de-
18 scribed in paragraph (15) of such section
19 1120(b).

20 “(B) APPLICATION.—Not later than 90
21 days after the date that the Secretary of Vet-
22 erans Affairs finalizes regulations described in
23 subparagraph (A), the Secretary of Labor shall,
24 by direct final rule, add the same disease to the
25 list established under paragraph (1).

“8143c. Employees exposed to burn pits and toxic hazards in foreign contingency operations.”.

(d) REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Labor shall submit to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Education and Workforce of the House of Representatives a report on the progress of implementing this Act and the amendments made by this Act, including the number of individuals who are eligible employees, as defined in section 8143c(a) of title 5, United States Code, as added by subsection (a) of this section.

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