

attorney is not required to file an action pursuing a Camp Lejeune claim. This is technically correct.

Depending on the facts and circumstances of the case, legal representation may be needed to have any chance at successfully pursuing your claim. Just look at the experience to date. Remember, this bill was passed 2 years ago almost. To date, almost no Camp Lejeune claims have been paid by the Navy. As of the end of February, 1,530 Camp Lejeune claims have been filed in the Eastern District of North Carolina, and 170,502 administrative claims are on file with the Navy. Of all those thousands of claims, only 48 cases have been determined to meet the government's criteria for settlement based on submitted documentation. Even there, the process for uploading what are known as the "substantiation documents" has been extremely difficult for families to understand.

And for cases that will ultimately be litigated, the process can be lengthy, complicated, and expensive. Toxic exposure cases are not easy to prepare or prove, particularly when they relate to conduct that happened decades ago. Victims will need to go through "discovery." For many of them, it will be the first time they have heard the word in that context. And they may need to retain expert witnesses to demonstrate causation.

While all of this can technically be done without an attorney, it is practically impossible to do so and have your claim succeed. So steering victims away from legal representation may eliminate any chance of recovery.

Finally, this bill contains a provision stating that a law firm that receives "veteran data" from an advertising agency must reduce their legal fee in an amount equal to the cost incurred to receive that data. It is unclear to me, in reading this bill, what the term "veteran data" even means. Additionally, this requirement would discourage attorneys from reaching out to potential plaintiffs who may have worked at Camp Lejeune years in the past and may not even know they are eligible for compensation.

After fighting so hard to make sure those poisoned by the water at Camp Lejeune can finally have their day in court, we should not now close the courtroom door all over again.

Let me be clear. If there are unscrupulous lawyers or nonlawyers who are deceiving veterans or running scam solicitations, I want to join in a bipartisan effort to crack down on them.

There is a bill, the GUARD VA Benefits Act, which has 42 bipartisan cosponsors, that is properly scoped to do just that. Current law prohibits individuals or businesses from assisting a veteran in preparation, presentation, or prosecution of a VA claim unless they are accredited by the Veterans' Administration. They are also prohibited from charging fees for this assistance before the VA makes a decision on the claim.

However, the VA and other Agencies are limited in their ability to enforce the law because criminal penalties were eliminated from the statute about 20 years ago. The GUARD VA Benefits Act would reinstate those criminal penalties.

This bill is a top priority for veterans organizations that have been working for years to combat predatory practices of unaccredited entities who charge unauthorized fees while purporting to help veterans with their disability claims. These are the types of reforms that will actually help veterans from Camp Lejeune and others as they seek compensation benefits.

I will be happy to work with the Senator from North Carolina to make sure that veterans are protected from unscrupulous actors while ensuring that we don't inhibit quality advocates from helping veterans finally get their day in court, but I cannot support the bill in its current form, and I would object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, just briefly, again, I appreciate Senator DURBIN as the chairman of the Judiciary Committee. We have had many opportunities to work together.

First off, I would just like to point out—and I will because I do intend to do unanimous consent for this—there is a burning platform issue here between now and August. These ads are going on and on. Veterans are making a phone call. I am looking at ways to get to these veterans, and I am told that this will make a connection. So that is something separate from some of the substance that Chairman DURBIN talked about.

We have processed about 12,000 cases since I have been here, since 2015. We referred a number to veterans service organizations. Veterans service organizations are approved by the VA and do have attorneys. They can triage cases. And one thing that they do very well is say: This is an easy case; we can help you with this one. This is not an easy case; you need to seek legal representation.

As a matter of fact, we do that as standard operating procedure in my office. I am not saying that many of these cases may need them, but I know a lot of them don't, and I suspect many of them don't. And every dime that you pay an attorney is a dime that is not going to the veteran.

So what I am trying to do here is just to make sure they understand that they have these resources available. It is amazing to me how surprised people are that I have 25 people in the State dedicated to casework, full-time people dedicated to veterans work, a great relationship with VSOs. All of those are free, highly skilled options for veterans that these ads on TV are not making clear to veterans.

We have to do right by veterans. Like I said, I am disappointed with the objection today, but we will have plenty of time to talk about this every week

that we are in session between now and August.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO DR. JOSEPH SUINA

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Dr. Joseph Suina for his service to our Nation.

Dr. Suina is a former Cochiti Pueblo Governor, a University of New Mexico professor emeritus, and a Vietnam and Marine Corps veteran. Recognition of Dr. Suina's service is long overdue.

But before I speak about his military service, I want to take a moment to recognize what Dr. Suina's decades of leadership have meant for Cochiti Pueblo and for New Mexico as a whole.

Over the course of his life, Dr. Suina has served as a Governor for his Pueblo and a Tribal council member. He also served as the president and CEO of the Cochiti Community Development Corporation and as the chair of the Cochiti Language Revival Committee.

But before all of that, Dr. Suina grew up in Cochiti Pueblo, within the adobe walls of his grandmother's home. He has recounted the nights she would sing to him in their native language and tell him stories of her childhood, well before electricity and cars had made their way to the Pueblo.

As a young boy, he was shunned by his teachers for speaking his native language at school and experienced the stark contrast between the teachings of his grandmother and those of his nonnative teachers.

Through it all, Dr. Suina found strength in his culture, later leading him to become a champion for keeping indigenous language and culture at the center of Native American education policy.

Dr. Suina worked for decades as a professor in the University of New Mexico's College of Education, and he directed the Institute for American Indian Education, serving Tribes across the Southwest. His scholarship focused on how maintaining connection to tradition, culture, and language improves educational outcomes for Native students.

He also developed new methods for assessing student learning and training programs for educators who teach Native students. And over the years, Dr. Suina has mentored countless teachers whose work continues to make a difference for New Mexico's children and children throughout the entire Southwest.

You can see the results of his work in so many communities, but especially in his home community of Cochiti Pueblo and at the Keres Children's Learning Center. The center is an indigenous language revitalization school that has become one of the very best early childhood and primary education centers in the entire country. It

is a living testament to Dr. Suina's visionary leadership and education.

The legacy of Dr. Suina's life of service to Cochiti Pueblo, to New Mexico, and to our Nation will be felt for generations to come.

And, today, I would also like to recognize Dr. Suina's service to our Nation as a marine.

In the early 1960s, just 3 days out of high school, Dr. Suina enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps. He went on to serve two tours of duty in Vietnam, in 1964 and in 1966. He was wounded in his second tour and earned a Purple Heart on March 22, 1966. He was honorably discharged with the rank of sergeant.

Tomorrow, Dr. Suina's friends and family members are gathering together at the New Mexico Veterans Memorial in Albuquerque to recognize his service to the Nation, and I am honored to have helped play a role in retrieving the medals that Dr. Suina earned as a marine and that he will receive at that gathering.

You see, back in the 1970s, Dr. Suina's house was broken into and his service medals were stolen.

As I mentioned earlier, Dr. Suina earned the Purple Heart Medal, which was one of the Nation's oldest and most distinguished medals. The Purple Heart is awarded to U.S. servicemembers who have been wounded or killed as a result of enemy action.

Dr. Suina also earned the following awards: the Combat Action Ribbon, the Marine Corps Good Combat Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal, the Rifle Sharpshooters Badge, the Pistol Expert Badge. And he also earned a Gallantry Cross Medal from the Republic of Vietnam.

I was deeply honored to help retrieve these medals that recognize Dr. Suina's incredible bravery and sacrifices.

And, before I finish, I also want to commend Dr. Suina for the ways that he has raised the visibility of the physical and often invisible wounds that impact veterans with PTSD.

In recent years, Dr. Suina has spoken about how he saw these wounds in himself, in his fellow Vietnam veterans, and in the veterans of his father's generation who served in World War II. Many of these veterans have come home with trauma that went unrecognized. And I am so appreciative that Dr. Suina is working to bring recognition and healing to himself and to his fellow veterans.

And on behalf of so many New Mexicans and so many Americans, I want to express just how profoundly grateful we are for Dr. Suina's lifetime of courage and of service.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

U.S. SUPREME COURT

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am here for what is No. 30 in my series of "Scheme" speeches, about the scheme to capture the Supreme Court. And I thought this would be a good

time to give sort of a quick overview of where we have been since most of my speeches have been rifle-shot speeches at individual issues that the Court has caused us to have to face up to.

So the fundamental problem here is that we have a Supreme Court that has been captured by rightwing special interests, and we see this in decision after decision after decision. And it is affecting the lives of ordinary Americans all over.

When I say that this is a Court that has been captured by rightwing special interests, what do I mean? Well, there is considerable research out there and considerable literature out there about a phenomenon that is sometimes called Agency capture, and it is sometimes called regulatory capture. It is the same thing. It is the capture of regulatory Agencies. And you can look it up in your library. You can look it up on the internet, and you can get a sense of the extent to which this is recognized in the economic literature, recognized in the administrative law literature. And it is a frequent avenue, unfortunately, of corruption into government decision making.

And if you want an example to think about, you could imagine a railroad commission whose job is to set rates for the railroad, back in the era of the railroad barons, and the railroad barons have chosen who is on the railroad commission. So the railroad commission isn't serving the public. It is doing exactly what the railroad barons want. That, in a nutshell, is what "Agency for regulatory capture" is all about.

And one of the things that we have discovered in the course of this is that the effort to capture the Court has been a very expensive effort. This is no small or casual thing.

True North Research has done a lot of this research. And so far, they are up to finding \$580 million that have been spent on this Court capture operation. It is not always easy to figure out because the money flows from one place to another through indirect sources and into entities that obscure who the original donor is. It is complicated. But \$580 million is a lot of money, and even very, very, very rich rightwing billionaires aren't going spend that much money on a whim. They are going to spend that kind of money because they are going to get a return on their \$580 million investment.

So that is the fundamental problem we are facing—a Court captured by special interests in the same way that, in the old days, Agencies and Commissions were captured. But that technique jumped the rails and was applied to our Supreme Court and with a very, very robust scheme behind it, with at least \$580 million spent to accomplish these goals.

So there you go. You have got your captured Court. You have spent your \$580 million. But can you really expect the judges that you helped put on the Court to remember exactly what it is they are supposed to do in every case?

No. That is pretty hard, even for very bright judges.

So the next thing you have to do is figure out how you get the Court to do what it is told and pass on the message of what it is that you want. You have captured a Court. How are you going to tell it what the outcome is that you want?

So this is a Court that is doing what it is told, and the manner in which it is told is actually fairly plain view, in some respects, because what happens is that the dark money billionaires fund groups that file briefs. And it is not just one brief. They file briefs in little flotillas. Usually the number is 10 or 12. In a case really important to them, we have seen the number get as high as 50. But that is pretty rare. So amici curiae—Latin for "friends of the court"—are groups that are allowed to file briefs in the Supreme Court, even though they are not a party to the case.

And they come in. And let's say that there is a dozen of them. They are coordinated. They send the same common message, and that way the Justices who have been put on the Court through this Court capture scheme are kept up to date on precisely what it is that their big donors want.

Now, when I say "fake amici," I mean that these are groups that don't very well disclose who is behind them. It doesn't say: We are here from Koch Industries. We are here from ExxonMobil.

It is intermediating groups that have mysterious sounding names. I will give you one example right here. This is a group of organizations managed by a guy named Leonard Leo, who was basically the fixer—the factotum—of the rightwing billionaires who spent the \$580 million to capture the Court.

You need an organizer. You need the orchestrator. You need a guy who runs around and does this stuff, and Leonard Leo is the guy. And he has his own little group up here of companies that report to him and pay him. This is how he gets money out of this scheme.

But down here, he has this array of front groups that he and his allies control. So 85 Fund and Concord Fund actually exist. They are corporate entities under Virginia corporate law.

These other entities—Judicial Education Project, Honest Elections Project, Free to Learn, Free to Learn Action, Honest Elections Project Action, and the Judicial Crisis Network—actually don't exist. What they are, under Virginia law, is fictitious names. That is the legal term for what they are—fictitious names for these entities.

So in one of the cases in which these phony front group amici appeared to tell the captured Justices what it was that their donors wanted, Honest Elections Project filed the brief.

It did not identify itself in its brief as being a mere fictitious name. It did not identify itself as being a mere fictitious name of this 85 Fund group. It did not identify that 85 Fund group as a