

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

June 21, 2013

The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave. N.W.
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shinseki,

We are writing to follow up on the implementation of the Burn Pits Registry at the Department of Veterans Affairs. We remain concerned that the VA is not adequately working to implement the Open Burn Pits Registry, and has not done enough to inform veterans and active duty service members about the risks they are facing due to exposure.

Specifically, in a previous letter many of us asked that “A campaign should be expeditiously implemented to alert veterans who served in OEF, OIF, and OND that if they were exposed to burn pits and have experienced adverse health impacts, that they should seek out information, care, and tests to determine the extent that open air burn pits have impacted their health. It is important that veterans understand that their sickness could be service related in order to ensure that they receive the benefits they have earned. Furthermore, for veterans who are unsure about their exposure, it is important that VA communicate the symptoms that have been experienced by other veterans so that they can work with their health officials and VA to determine whether their sickness is service related.” So far, the VA has fallen well short of this expectation.

The VA recently announced in the federal register a request for comments for information needed to ascertain and monitor the health effects of the exposure of members of the Armed Forces to toxic airborne chemicals and fumes caused by open burn pits. While we are glad that the VA is moving forward to request comments, we believe that this process needs to be better advertised by the VA and that the draft questionnaire and links to make written comments and recommendations should be made available online as soon as technically feasible. Currently, veterans must email the VA and request the draft. This is an overly cumbersome requirement for some veterans, and many of our constituents have asked that the VA make the questionnaire more easily accessible.

Furthermore, we request that the VA utilize email, social media, and other methods of communication to highlight the request for information, and to communicate with veterans about the registry in the future. The VA should also include easily accessible links on the VA website to applicable documents which can be easily retrieved by veterans and concerned members of the public. Finally, in order to better serve our veterans who are interested in the outcome of this

process, we request that the VA add an additional 15 days to the comment period to better ensure full participation by our veterans, their families, and members of the public.

We thank you for your efforts to address these concerns and look forward to hearing your response about these issues.

Sincerely,



Tom Udall
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



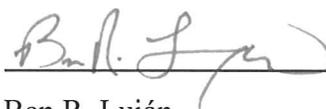
Mark Udall
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Tim Bishop
Member of Congress



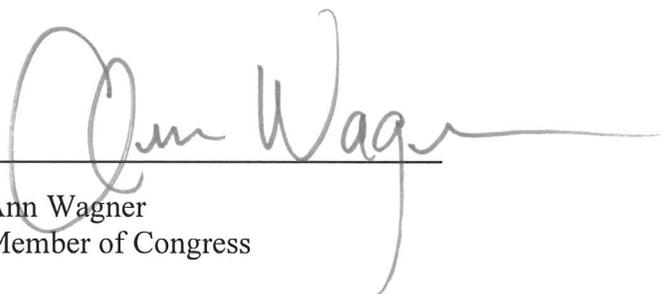
Ben R. Luján
Member of Congress



Steve Pearce
Member of Congress



Michele Lujan Grisham
Member of Congress



Ann Wagner
Member of Congress