Senate Joint Memorial 202
Sponsored by Senator OLSEN, Representatives LEWIS, MEEK; Senators BAERTSCHIGER JR, GIROD, HANSELL, KNOPP, LINTHICUM, THATCHER, THOMSEN, Representative BARRETO (Presession filed.)

SUMMARY
The following summary is not prepared by the sponsors of the measure and is not a part of the body thereof subject to consideration by the Legislative Assembly. It is an editor's brief statement of the essential features of the measure as introduced.

Urges Congress to enact legislation that addresses medical care and disability compensation for veterans exposed to burn pits while serving overseas.

JOINT MEMORIAL
To the President of the United States, the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, and the United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs:
We, your memorialists, the Eightieth Legislative Assembly of the State of Oregon, in legislative session assembled, respectfully represent as follows:
Whereas countless men and women serving in the Armed Forces of the United States were exposed to open burn pits while on overseas duty in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere; and
Whereas burn pits varied in size from small pits used by units in forward combat positions to massive pits such as the one at Joint Base Balad, which was 25 acres in size and burned hundreds of tons of waste each day; and
Whereas burn pits were used for disposal of garbage, human waste, medical waste, military equipment, paint, plastics and other harmful substances, and they were typically ignited using aviation fuel; and
Whereas exposure to toxic fumes from burn pits has been linked to lung diseases, cancers and other chronic and serious health conditions; and
Whereas burn pits in combat zones have largely been replaced by clean-burning incinerators, but several large burn pits are still in operation in the Middle East and current policy allows burn pits in areas where installing incinerators is not feasible; and
Whereas in an April 2019 report to Congress, the Department of Defense acknowledged that burn pits are a health risk to our troops; and
Whereas under current policy, a veteran might have to prove that they served in the immediate proximity of burn pits, rather than having their exposure presumed by the dates and location of their service; and
Whereas the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) currently decides disability compensation for health problems related to burn pit exposure on a case-by-case basis; and
Whereas although tens of thousands of veterans and their families are suffering, the benefits claims of many veterans are bogged down in bureaucratic red tape, while the claims of other veterans have been denied outright; and
Whereas the response of the VA to this looming health care crisis for our veterans has been slow and ineffective; and
Whereas a comprehensive overhaul of the current system is necessary to ensure that our vet-

NOTE: Matter in boldfaced type in an amended section is new; matter [italic and bracketed] is existing law to be omitted. New sections are in boldfaced type.

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erans receive the medical care and benefits they have earned by their selfless service; now, there-
fore,  

Be It Resolved by the Legislative Assembly of the State of Oregon:

That we, the members of the Eightieth Legislative Assembly, respectfully urge the Congress of
the United States to affirm its commitment to veterans by enacting legislation that addresses med-
ical care and disability compensation for veterans exposed to burn pits while serving overseas; and
be it further

Resolved, That a copy of this memorial shall be sent to the President of the United States, to
the Senate Majority Leader, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to each member of the
Oregon Congressional Delegation and to the United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

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