

HJM 2 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Veterans and Emergency Management

Action Date: 01/28/21

Action: Without recommendation as to adoption and be referred to Rules.

Vote: 6-0-0-0

Yeas: 6 - Evans, Grayber, Lewis, Meek, Wallan, Wright

Fiscal: No fiscal impact

Revenue: No revenue impact

Prepared By: Cassie Passon, Counsel

Meeting Dates: 1/28

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Urges Congress to provide for treatment of veterans who participated in cleanup of Enewetak Atoll.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- No discussion; measure scheduled only for referral to Rules

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Between 1948 and 1958 the United States conducted 43 nuclear tests on the Enewetak Atoll. Cleanup lasted three years, from 1977 to 1980. Approximately 6,000 servicemembers assisted in the cleanup operation, of an estimated 85,000 cubic meters of contaminated soil, concrete, and military equipment that was deposited in Cactus Crater on Runit Island. During each servicemember's six-month tour, they essentially lived on the islands being cleaned.

Currently the federal government does not recognize servicemembers who cleaned up Enewetak Atoll as "atomic veterans," meaning they are not eligible to receive radiation exposure compensation from the federal Veterans Administration (the federal VA). A version of the Atomic Veterans Healthcare Parity Act, which would designate the servicemembers who cleaned up Enewetak Atoll as "atomic veterans," has been introduced in Congress every year since 2014 but has yet to be enacted.

House Joint Memorial 2 urges Congress to act on behalf of servicemembers who were exposed to radiation during cleanup of the Enewetak Atoll.