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Members of the House Veterans and Emergency Management Committee

My name is Gary Remington and I live in Dallas, OR. I am writing you because I am extremely interested HB2644; renaming part of Interstate 5 between Albany and Salem to Atomic Veterans and Atomic Cleanup Veterans Memorial highway and HJM2; urging Congress to prioritize treatment of veterans who participated in cleanup of Enewetak Atoll.....”

I am humbled that you would consider this legislation and would like to share with you my story and ask that you amend the dates that appear in both bills. The date amendment would then include all Veterans that were involved in Atomic at Enewetak . Specifically, I am asking that 1977 be amended to include the Navy service members that were there performing cleanup duties in 1962.

I, along with 47 other men from the Navy MCB11 were sent to Enewetak in 1962 to disassemble the buildings and stack them for shipping out to Okinawa. We were told we could not drink the water and they supplied us with plenty of beer. We were also told not to take our cameras but being a young sailor on a tropical island I of course took mine and I have plenty of pictures showing us performing the cleanup efforts on the island as well as just being young men. I have been asked by the military and Congress to turn over these photos on many occasions but have only provided them with copies not the originals. My reason, to this day to deny what MCB11 did in that region prior to 1977. They are my only proof that I was even there since my military records were “sealed” until not long ago and are still very much redacted.

After the deployment to the Enewetak, the MCB11 detachment was split up, sent on separate missions. Many members were killed in Vietnam and other have lost touch over the years. I have tried endlessly to get in contact with them. The only ones that I have been able to track down have all died of cancer except for Jim Caraway who lives in California and who has also had similar issues and “government denial” of the earlier clean updates.

Since 1976 I have had ongoing health problems, bone, and muscle deterioration among many other health issues. I have suffered several strokes, hearing issues, and have developed type II diabetes. The Military has continued to deny that my conditions have anything to do with my military service or my exposure while serving on Enewetak. I have never been compensated for any of my personally paid medical bills and I have never collected disability.

I appreciate the nudge that you are giving Congress with HJM2 to request they move forward with H.R. 1377. This is not the first attempt to get Congress to take action to recognize this group of veterans, but I am hopeful that this time it will move through the process. In addition, I applaud your local efforts with the highway renaming and thank you for that work with your colleagues. I humbly request that you amend both bills to acknowledge those of us that served in the atomic cleanup and decontamination of Enewetak prior to 1977 with an amended date to 1962 to 1980.

Respectfully,

Gary Remington