

February 14, 2017

Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington DC

Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington DC

Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington DC

Honorable Steny Hoyer
Minority Whip
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington DC

Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Chairman, House Judiciary Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington DC

Honorable John Conyers
Ranking Member, House Judiciary
Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington DC

Re: Veterans Service Organization oppose the “Furthering Asbestos Claims Transparency (FACT) Act”

Dear Speaker Ryan, Leader McCarthy, Leader Pelosi, Whip Hoyer, Chairman Goodlatte, and Ranking Member Conyers:

We, the undersigned Veterans Service Organizations oppose the “Furthering Asbestos Claims Transparency (FACT) Act.” We have continuously expressed our united opposition to this legislation via written testimony to the House Judiciary Committee, House Leadership, in-person meetings and phone calls with members of Congress. It is extremely disappointing that even with our combined opposition, the FACT Act will be marked up in the House Judiciary Committee later this week.

Veterans across the country disproportionately make up those who are dying and afflicted with mesothelioma and other asbestos related illnesses and injuries. Although veterans represent only 8% of the nation’s population, they comprise 30% of all known mesothelioma deaths.

When our veterans and their family members file claims with the asbestos bankruptcy trusts to receive compensation for harm caused by asbestos companies, they submit personal, highly sensitive information such as how and when they were exposed to the deadly product, sensitive health information, and more. The FACT Act would require asbestos trusts to publish their sensitive information on a public database, and include how much money they received for their claim as well as other private information. Forcing our veterans to publicize their work histories, medical conditions, social security numbers, and information about their children and families is an offensive invasion of privacy to the men and women who have honorably served, and it does nothing to assure their adequate compensation or to prevent future asbestos exposures and deaths.

Additionally, the FACT Act helps asbestos companies add significant time and delay paying trust claims to our veterans and their families by putting burdensome and costly reporting requirements on trusts, including those that already exist. One must ask what is the real motivation for this legislation? Rather than pursuing legislation to make it easier and less burdensome for our veterans and their families to get the compensation they so desperately need for medical bills and end of life care, trusts will instead spend valuable time and resources complying with these additional and unnecessary requirements at the expense of our veterans.

The FACT Act is a bill that its supporters claim will help asbestos victims, but the reality is that this bill only helps companies and manufacturers who knowingly poisoned our honorable men and women who have made sacrifices for our country.

We urgently ask on behalf of our members across the nation that you oppose the FACT Act.

Please contact Hershel Gober, National Legislative Director, Military Order of the Purple Heart at (202) 550-2491 or goberh@aol.com with any questions.

Signed:

Air Force Sergeants Association

Air Force Women's Officers Associated (AFWOA)

American Veterans (AMVETS)

Association of the United States Navy (AUSN)

Commissioned Officers Association of the US Public Health Service

Fleet Reserve Association (FRA)

Jewish War Veterans of the USA (JWV)

Marine Corps Reserve Association (MCRA)

Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)

Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH)

National Association for Uniformed Services (NAUS)

National Defense Council

Naval Enlisted Reserve Association

The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA)

United States Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers Association

United States Army Warrant Officers Association

Vietnam Veterans Association (VVA)