**Caring For Camp Lejeune Families Act Passes Senate To Help Marines Affected By Tainted Water**

Decades after one of the [worst cases of drinking water contamination](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/13/camp-lejeune-water-contamination-navy-letter_n_1203465.html) in U.S. history, thousands of affected Marines and family members may finally receive health care.

Estimates suggest that [up to one million Marines](http://semperfialwaysfaithful.com/facts) and family members were exposed to drinking water contaminated with human carcinogens at the Marine Corps' Camp Lejeune in North Carolina over the course of about 30 years.

**The U.S. Senate unanimously passed a measure on Wednesday providing** [**health care to those who lived or worked at the base**](http://www.starnewsonline.com/article/20120719/ARTICLES/120719630/1177?Title=Senate-approves-bill-to-help-Lejeune-Marines) **from 1957 to 1987, the Associated Press reports**.

The Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012 will require the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide health care for those with certain diseases and conditions resulting from exposure to the contaminated water, following what has been called "the [largest recorded environmental incident](http://veterans.senate.gov/rankingmember/ranking-press-releases.cfm?action=release.display&release_id=279146e5-fa7a-4030-a7d2-05d36216f3b9) on a domestic Department of Defense installation."

[Sen. Richard Burr, R-N.C.](http://burr.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=PressOffice.PressReleases&ContentRecord_id=9f7452ca-ec32-2555-79f7-dc8e64f5d6ec&Region_id=&Issue_id=) said in a statement, "This has been a long time coming, and unfortunately, many who were exposed to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune over the years have died as a result and are not with us to receive the care this bill will provide ... While I wish we could have accomplished this years ago, we now have the opportunity to do the right thing for the thousands of Navy and Marine veterans and their families who were harmed during their service to our country."

"The push for answers continues, but in the meantime, veterans and family members are suffering," [Sen. Kay Hagan, D-N.C.](http://www.hagan.senate.gov/?p=press_release&id=1859) said in a statement. She added, "Many need treatment today and cannot afford to wait while studies are completed. The Marines and their family members affected by this tragedy have sacrificed to keep this country safe. After decades of denial, this country owes it to them to ensure they are taken care of in their time of need."

The bill was first blocked by Sen. Jim DeMint, R-S.C. due to concerns over fraud, but his issues were addressed in an amended version. The bill will now go to the House for passage, and McClatchy News reports the [bill could reach President Obama](http://www.miamiherald.com/2012/07/18/2901735/senate-passes-camp-lejeune-water.html) by the end of the summer.

Earlier this year, HuffPost's Lynne Peeples reported on government watchdogs [calling the U.S. Navy a "bully"](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/24/camp-lejeune-water-contamination-watchdog-groups_n_1228041.html) over a redacted federal report on Camp Lejeune's drinking water supply. [The U.S. Navy pushed to suppress details](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/13/camp-lejeune-water-contamination-navy-letter_n_1203465.html) on the locations of active water lines, wells, treatment plants and storage tanks from the report, claiming national security concerns.

Rachel Libert, director of a [Camp Lejeune contamination documentary](http://semperfialwaysfaithful.com/), told Peeples at the time, "There really needs to be more accountability over the Department of Defense and what they do to the environment here and abroad."

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