

*TALKING POINTS*

*VA COMMITTEE MEMBER DAY TESTIMONY*

*3 MINUTES*

*MAY 16, 2018*

**Introduction (15 Seconds)**

- Thank you Chairman Roe and Ranking Member Walz for providing me with the opportunity to speak to you about an important issue impacting many of our veterans.

**Overview on PFAS (1 Minute)**

- I represent Oscoda, Michigan, a small community that contains the former Wurtsmith Air Force base, which was closed during a round of BRAC more than twenty years ago.
- Oscoda has been working to recover from the impact caused by the closure of its base as well as dealing with some legacy issues caused by the base's operations.
- For many decades, the DoD has used a class of chemicals called PFAS in its firefighting foam.
- While PFAS is very good at quickly putting out fires, it is a toxic chemical that causes negative health affects in humans.
- In Oscoda, the Defense Department's firefighting foam has leached into the groundwater around the former base and contaminated drinking water for residents nearby.

## *TALKING POINTS*

### *VA COMMITTEE MEMBER DAY TESTIMONY*

*3 MINUTES*

*MAY 16, 2018*

- Residents of the town and Wurtsmith's military families unknowingly drank this contaminated groundwater for years.

### **Health Care for Veterans Legislation (1.5 Minutes)**

- I know this committee has been looking at how we take care of our veterans who have been exposed to toxic chemicals.
- Many of these chemicals we know a lot about, including Agent Orange, PCBs and TCE.
- PFAS, on the other hand, is a new group of chemicals where there is a small—yet growing and concerning—amount of research being done on them.
- The exposure to PFAS has already been linked to cancer, as well as thyroid, kidney, liver, heart and reproductive problems.
- That is why in last year's NDAA, I pushed to include a requirement that the DoD study the health impacts of PFAS on service members. I was happy to see this health study included in the final bill.
- It is estimated that this study will take 5-7 years to be completed. Once it is completed, we will know more about

## *TALKING POINTS*

### *VA COMMITTEE MEMBER DAY TESTIMONY*

*3 MINUTES*

*MAY 16, 2018*

the health issues associated with exposure to these chemicals.

- As soon as we know what the health issues of PFAS exposure are, the VA Committee should move to pass legislation immediately to consider those conditions as service-connected illnesses, and the VA should provide the impacted veterans with health coverage.
- Many veterans are already facing costly medical bills because of health issues associated with PFAS exposure. These veterans need our help.
- I have been working with the committee, especially my friend and colleague from Michigan, Congressman Bergman, on this issue to ensure we get the veterans the health care they need.
- I look forward to working with you on passing legislation that would ensure veterans exposed to PFAS have the health coverage they need.

### **Conclusion (15 Seconds)**

- Thank you for providing me with time to speak today about PFAS and getting veterans the health care they need.
- This is a problem that is not isolated to my district – many members of Congress, in both the House and the Senate,

*TALKING POINTS*

*VA COMMITTEE MEMBER DAY TESTIMONY*

*3 MINUTES*

*MAY 16, 2018*

are dealing with this issue.

- I look forward to working with the committee on this.