



February 28, 2022

NTU urges all Representatives to vote "NO" on H.R. 3967, the Honoring our PACT Act of 2021. Though the legislation is well-intentioned – and though the U.S. government absolutely has a responsibility to pay for veterans’ service-connected medical conditions and/or disabilities – H.R. 3967 would prematurely expand Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits before the VA has completed research on veterans’ medical conditions, and would add up to [\\$322 billion to deficits](#) over the next decade. NTU has long held that Congress has a responsibility to offset even necessary new spending, including [disaster relief spending](#). Lawmakers should instead consider bipartisan legislation ([S. 3541](#)) that addresses veterans with toxin exposure, has passed the Senate, and [costs only around \\$1 billion](#). Alternatively, Congress could cover the costs of H.R. 3967 with cuts to wasteful spending at the Department of Defense and/or elsewhere.

NTU has no doubt that the sponsors behind the Honoring our PACT Act are well-intentioned in supporting the expansion of VA health care and disability compensation. Hopefully, all Members of Congress would agree that veterans who have medical conditions or disabilities as a result of their service to the country should receive comprehensive care and generous benefits paid for by the federal government (and taxpayers). However, even necessary spending authorized or appropriated by Congress should be offset elsewhere in the budget. Unfortunately, H.R. 3967 would not offset any new proposed spending. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) [estimates](#) that the bill would increase deficits by \$207.5 billion over 10 years. The bill could increase deficits an additional \$114.2 billion (i.e., \$321.7 billion in total deficits) if Congress approves new discretionary spending to comply with the bill’s requirements and does not offset that new discretionary spending. In other words, the deficit impact of the bill could be almost as large as the [Build Back Better Act](#), and larger than the [bipartisan infrastructure law](#) and most other legislation Congress has considered in the current session.

Military.com [notes](#) that the VA “is reviewing data and research to determine whether some types of cancer and a rare lung disease, known as constrictive bronchiolitis, should be added to the list of presumptive illnesses” for veterans exposed to toxins in the post-9/11 era, and that VA decisions “are expected this year.” It is premature to pass a \$322-billion spending bill before full VA data and research on these complicated matters have been shared with Congress and the public.

Fortunately, there is bipartisan legislation that has already passed the Senate that would take a “[first step](#)” in assisting veterans exposed to toxins, and would only have a likely budget impact of [around \\$1 billion](#). The House should consider this legislation, [S. 3541](#), rather than H.R. 3967. If Congress instead would like to pass H.R. 3967 and offset its \$322 billion cost, we would encourage them to look at cuts to the [Department of Defense](#) (DoD) budget and/or [wasteful spending](#). We have made deficit reduction suggestions for both DoD individually and the federal government as a whole that would more than offset the cost of this legislation.

Roll call votes on H.R. 3967 will be included in NTU’s annual Rating of Congress and a “NO” vote will be considered the pro-taxpayer position.

If you have any questions, please contact NTU Director of Federal Policy Andrew Lautz at alautz@ntu.org.
