

December 14, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We, the undersigned, are constituents of the largest male breast cancer cluster ever identified – 73 men. Though we come from different backgrounds, hail from different states and vote for different parties, we are united by a common thread: at some point in our lives all us lived or worked aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune when the base's drinking water supply was highly contaminated by toxic chemicals including the recently declared human carcinogen: trichloroethylene (TCE).

From the mid 1950's until 1987, an estimated 1,000,000 Marines, sailors, their family members, and loyal civilian employees aboard Camp Lejeune were exposed to tap water containing extremely high concentrations of volatile organic compounds and known carcinogens such as benzene, vinyl chloride and trichloroethylene (TCE), in addition to perchloroethylene (PCE), a probable carcinogen.

This incident is the largest documented case of drinking water contamination at a U.S. domestic military facility. Thanks to the efforts of retired Master Sergeant Jerry Ensminger, whose daughter, Janey, was conceived at Camp Lejeune and died at the age of nine of acute lymphoblastic leukemia, we discovered that the Marine Corps leadership allowed the contamination to exist in the drinking water system for four and a half years despite repeated warnings from independent scientific laboratories.

Decades have passed and yet we continue to learn more about the true extent of the contamination amidst false assurances of full disclosure from the Marine Corps leadership to Congress, the media and the public. For example, as detailed in a September 2010 House Science and Technology subcommittee hearing, documents revealed that over 1 million gallons of fuel had leaked from underground tanks near drinking water supply wells on the base. This admission, contradicted earlier claims made by Marine Corps officials who estimated a loss of 30,000 to 50,000 gallons from their fuel farm. Such inaccuracies demonstrate that the Marine Corps and the Department of the Navy have not just failed to protect the health of their own; they have betrayed the trust of those who served this country with honor.

What happened to us is no coincidence. Male breast cancer accounts for less than 1 percent of all breast carcinomas, according to the National Cancer Institute. The disease is especially rare in young men under the age of 56; notably, 30 of us were diagnosed before the age of 57. Although 100 times less common among men than women, male breast cancer is just as deadly. And it is but one disease occurring among those who lived and worked at Camp Lejeune; many more struggle with other rare cancers, chronic

diseases and birth defects. Mr. President, it is time the Marine Corps live up to its motto: *Semper Fidelis*, “Always Faithful.”

Almost 25 years have passed without a policy that provides health care for those made ill by these chemicals. The Department of Veterans Affairs does not automatically provide health benefits for exposure-related illnesses associated with the chemicals found in Camp Lejeune’s drinking water and does not cover dependents exposed on the base. However, bipartisan efforts are underway in Congress to provide medical care and services for the veterans and families suffering from the effects of the contamination. The Caring for Camp Lejeune Veterans Act of 2011, introduced by Sen. Burr and Sen. Hagan, was unanimously approved by the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, but it has yet to be brought to the floor for a vote. A similar bill introduced by Rep. Brad Miller, the Janey Ensminger Act, has also received bipartisan support in the House but no vote has been taken.

In the meantime, we are ill. Some of us are dying and others have already succumbed to this disease. As more and more people call attention to this calamity, we ask for your active engagement alongside the Department of Defense and lawmakers in Congress to ensure that care and services are provided immediately to the men and women who, while serving our country, were unwittingly exposed to toxic contaminants in their drinking water.

These Americans and their families have already sacrificed much. It is time they are shown the loyalty they deserve.

Sincerely,

Mike Partain, Marine dependent son

Fredrick A. Anderson, USMC

Russell S. Barbuto, USMC

James Bellerive, USMC

Ralph Burkeen, USMC

Daniel M. Dennis, USMC

Peter Devereaux, USMC

James Fontella, USMC

Thomas A. Gervasi, USMC

Joseph Glowacki, USMC

Stanley Haas, USMC

Monte M. Hayes, USMC

Richard S. Heaton, Sr., USMC

Hershel House, USMC

Edward Hughes, USMC

David Lewis, USMC

Jesus C. Marroquin, USMC

Jerry Millward, USMC

James E. Morris, USMC

Michael W. Muller, USMC

Douglas Palmer, USMC

Allen Quesnel, USMC

Theodore M. Richardson, USMC

Chester Sisky, USMC

William Smith, USMC

Doyle L. Spinks, USMC

Terry Torney, USMC

Robert L. Trafters, USMC

Kenneth Gaubert, Marine dependent son

Steven P. Martin, Jr., Marine dependent son

Joe Murgio, Jr., Marine dependent son

Kris Thomas, Marine dependent son

Sandra Davis, surviving daughter of Gardner C. Baker, USMC

Marjolijn Elmhirst, widow of Michael P. Elmhirst, USMC

Jodie Faber, surviving sister of Michael J. Randels, USMC

Gary Hudson, surviving son of Robert Hudson, USMC

Jean E. Kriebel, widow of Wendell T. Kriebel, USMC

Vida Matthews, widow of Unis Matthews, Jr., USMC

Marion McCaskey, surviving stepdaughter of Bobby Hoover, USMC

Betty Truax, widow of Stanley Truax, USMC

Cc:

The Honorable Leon Panetta, Secretary of Defense

The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki, Secretary of Veterans Affairs

The Honorable Nancy Sutley, Chair, Council on Environmental Quality

The Honorable Harry Reid, Senate Majority Leader

The Honorable Patty Murray, Chair, Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs

The Honorable Richard Burr, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs

The Honorable Jeff Miller, Chairman, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

The Honorable Bob Filner, Ranking Member, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

The Honorable Brad Miller, United States House of Representatives