

**The Honorable David J. Shulkin, M.D.**  
**Ninth Secretary, US Department of Veterans Affairs**  
**601 Pennsylvania Ave NW #1007**  
**Washington, DC 20004**

March 11, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

I am writing to recommend Rosie and LeRoy Torres and Jon Stewart and John Feal for the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Having served with you in the Obama/Biden Administration as the Under Secretary of Health at the Veterans Health Administration and then serving as the Secretary of the VA, I have great familiarity of the issue of toxic exposure to veterans. For too long we have ignored our nation's responsibility to care for those who were hurt or injured while serving. In particular, the system was designed to delay care and benefits until the science was able to prove an association existed and this too often resulted in decades of denying benefits and healthcare to those who needed it most.

LeRoy Torres was one of those veterans that needed help as a result of toxic exposures. He served the country honorably and yet had to fight for the benefits and care that he deserved. As is often the case, it's not only the veteran that suffers during an illness or disability. Rather the entire family is part of that battle. In this case LeRoy's wife Rosie took it upon herself to not only fight for her husband but to fight for all other veterans and their families that found themselves in a similar situation. By starting BurnPits 360, Rosie gave the veteran community a voice for speaking out for all of those that previously were isolated. Together, Rosie and her organization became a champion for those in need.

With LeRoy and Rosie's determination, they found two powerful voices in Jon Stewart and John Feal. Jon and John understood that this issue was not going to be resolved with the ability to explain the importance of this issue to the American public. They were strong advocates for those that could no longer speak and they took the message far and wide.

Looking back, now that the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our PACT Act is law, it may appear to have been a smooth path. But it was far from that. There were obstacles everywhere. But the four of these individuals would not take no for an answer. As barriers were identified, their determination grew stronger. With the backing of the veteran community, and the support of the American public, LeRoy, Rosie, Jon and John were successful in gaining critical support for this legislation.

The Honoring our PACT Act legislation, in my opinion, is one of the most important pieces of veteran law in recent history. It not only provides real help and hope to veterans that need it the most, but it reaffirms our nation's commitment to those that have served.

I strongly support your consideration of Rosie, LeRoy, Jon, and John for the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Sincerely,

*David Shulkin, M.D.*

David Shulkin MD