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**January 10, 2020**

Representative Paul Renner  
House Judiciary Committee, Chairman  
The Capitol Room 418  
402 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399  
[Paul.renner@myfloridahouse.gov](mailto:Paul.renner@myfloridahouse.gov)

Representative Thomas Leek  
House Office Building Room 402  
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Dear Chairman Renner;

The Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of Florida, would like to bring to your attention what we believe are the unintended consequences of HB 741 upon our members and the Florida veterans' community in general.

Veterans may only represent 8% of the nation's population, but they comprise an astonishing 30% of all known mesothelioma deaths that have occurred in this country. Exposure to asbestos is the only known cause of mesothelioma.

This legislation places an unfair burden upon the veteran to identify all possible defendants before being able to act against one. Rather than giving those suffering from mesothelioma the choice to get to trial quickly, this legislation forces veterans to wait indefinitely while pursuing claims with little, or no, chance for a meaningful recovery. This legislation may well result in a suit not being adjudicated prior to the veteran's death or incapacity to participate in their own trial.

In addition, this legislation robs veterans of their constitutional right to a jury trial by giving asbestos corporations the power to run out the clock on sick and dying veterans. Our veterans who suffer from mesothelioma, if they are lucky enough to determine a specific defendant who may be liable, should not have their cause of action delayed because of asbestos industry gamesmanship.

The injustice this would be to our veterans is magnified by the fact that this legislation is unnecessary. Under current law, injured plaintiffs are already required to disclose their complete work histories and exposure information. Asbestos defendants have more than enough information to defend themselves and implicate other asbestos companies in court already.

Further, this legislation effectively takes away a veteran's rights to hold an asbestos company accountable for their asbestosis or silicosis diseases. A veteran's treating physician should be focused on providing the best possible care, not wasting their time drafting a report stating that the veteran's asbestosis or silicosis disease meets some arbitrary thresholds established by the asbestos defendants. Veterans, who often receive care from the overworked VA, may be unable to receive the tests required by this bill at all. If the veteran was forced to abandon their physician, or pay out of pocket for care, just to be able to bring a claim, this would effectively take away their constitutional right to a jury trial against the asbestos companies that caused them harm.

Asbestos companies betrayed our community by covering up the dangers of asbestos and unduly exposing veterans to unnecessary harm. HB 741 is unnecessary and will make it much harder for Florida's veterans and their families to hold the asbestos companies accountable. For these reasons, we respectfully urge you to oppose HB 741.

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