

For Immediate Release – July 31, 2012

Contact: LuAnn Canipe (202) 225-3032 or 6089 /luann.canipe@mail.house.gov

Bill to Help Camp Lejeune Families Passes House; Headed to the President's Desk to be Signed Into Law

Washington, D.C. – Today, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the *Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012*

. Among other important provisions, this bill provides hospital care and medical coverage for certain illnesses to veterans and their families who were stationed at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

Marines and their families who lived on Camp Lejeune between 1957 and 1987 drank, bathed in, and cooked with water contaminated by various volatile organic compounds (VOCs), including Trichloroethylene (TCE) and Tetrachloroethylene (PCE), benzene, and vinyl chloride. Many have become ill with diseases that have been linked to the chemicals in the water. In certain cases the contamination was as high as 280 times the safe level based on Safe Drinking Water Act regulations.

"There should have been as much loyalty down the chain of command as there was up the chain of command, and there wasn't," **Rep. Brad Miller** said.

Click to view the Congressman's remarks about the bill on the House floor: <http://youtu.be/QhhO2gLuzww>

Complete text of remarks on the House floor:

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act, which the House will consider later today, especially Title I, The Janey Ensminger Act.

Title I and a similar House bill honor a nine-year-old girl who died from childhood leukemia, most likely because she was exposed to contaminated drinking water at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, when her mother was pregnant with her.

And by honoring Janey Ensminger, we honor those Americans who have shown remarkable determination to make their government do the right thing.

They have struggled for more than a decade to learn exactly what chemicals were in the contaminated drinking water at Camp Lejeune, water that perhaps a million Marines and their families were exposed to over a 30 year period, the health effects of exposure to the contaminated drinking water, and to seek justice for those harmed.

They took on their own government, including the Marine Corps that they had served and to which they are still loyal, but which has been shamefully reluctant to accept responsibility for the water contamination.

Janey's father, Jerry Ensminger, is a retired Marine who lived with his family on-base at Camp Lejeune for a time.

Jerry watched his daughter become ill from leukemia, struggle with the disease and eventually lose the struggle.

Years after he watched his daughter die, Jerry learned of the water contamination at Camp Lejeune, and has not rested since.

I first met Jerry four years ago, when he testified powerfully before the Science and Technology Committee's subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight, which I then chaired. Jerry worked shoulder to shoulder with others, including Tom Townsend, Mike Partain, Jim Fontella, the Byron family and William Hill against long odds.

The Janey Ensminger Act is the result of their remarkable efforts. They were faithful always to the cause of justice for those harmed by the contaminated drinking water.

The Janey Ensminger Act will provide VA medical coverage for certain illnesses to veterans who served at Camp Lejeune between 1957 and 1987, and to their families. The VA will be the "payer of last resort."

Justice requires no less for the people harmed by the water contamination at Camp Lejeune.

The harm will never be fully made right. The bill will not help Janey or her father, but the Janey Ensminger Act acknowledges responsibility and provides needed treatment and care for many others.

The Marines who have championed this legislation served our democracy while they wore our nation's uniform, and they served our democracy by their determination to obtain justice for the people harmed by the toxic drinking water at Camp Lejeune.

###