

HB 1207

The ND Veterans Legislative Council opposes this bill,

Asbestos hardly needs an introduction anymore as by now we all should be aware of the dangers of disturbing and breathing asbestos fibers. At the least, asbestos is a breathing irritant. At worst asbestos can cause mesothelioma, a cancerous condition that can lead to serious health problems and even death. Asbestos can cause or has links to other cancers, such as lung cancer, laryngeal, ovarian, stomach, colon, and kidney to name a few.

Most of us have un-knowingly been exposed to asbestos. Most commonly from our homes and military service, especially the Navy.

Sailors who served in WWII, Korea, Vietnam, and many other conflicts served on ships that were full of asbestos. Thousands upon thousands of sailors and Marines were regularly and unknowingly exposed to asbestos. I served on one such ship. During my many deployments to Vietnam and in firing exercises afterwards would back to our berthing compartments or mess deck only to find our racks, the floor and everything else covered in a blanket of asbestos particles from all the piping just inches above our heads. We just shook our bedding creating a cloud of asbestos dust and went to sleep. I was on this ship 3 ½ years and went to Vietnam 4 times for at least a six-month long deployment each time. During our time in the combat zone, we constantly fired the large guns which shook the vessel with each firing. This would last for most of the day into the night for days and weeks on end. Our longest stretch was 28 days. I and my shipmates were exposed to high levels of asbestos dust in a confined space for extended periods of time.

Asbestos fibers are the most dangerous when they are airborne and can be breathed in.

Veterans comprise about 8% of our country's population. However, we account for 30 % of the nearly 3000 people who die each year from mesothelioma. This rare cancer is incurable and nearly always fatal. The only cause of this cancer is ASBESTOS!!! Many sailors, Marines, airmen and soldiers are also among the 12-15 thousand who die annual from not only mesothelioma but lung cancer and asbestosis.

According to Asbestos Nation, a 505 c 4 which fights for asbestos victim's rights, well over 40,000 veterans may have died the years from asbestos related cancers. Unfortunately, today's veterans are still be exposed from the buildings in battle zones through the world.

The latency period of asbestos is 15-40 years from exposure. This means that I am just coming into the time when symptoms are showing up and many people have some time to go.

We believe, in this point in time and with what we know about the dangers of asbestos rather than taking steps to make sure that veterans and other groups of people that they will no longer be exposed to asbestos, the asbestos industry is pushing forth legislation around the country that would strip victims of asbestos related cancers from the right to hold this industry accountable.

Veterans groups are pushing back against this legislation, not only in the Congress of the United States along with a number of other state legislatures that would delay and deny compensation for sick and dying veterans along with place additional burdens on victims of asbestos related cancers.

The ND Veteran Legislative Council which as you know represents the veterans of ND were overwhelmed and deeply grateful for what the Legislature did for us in the last session.

The veterans of North Dakota hope that this body will vote no on this legislation and continue your support of veterans.

This bill only benefits the asbestos industry and its network of those that manufacture and sell asbestos contaminated products. It does the average North Dakotan no good at all.

Thank you