

**Opening Statement**  
**The Honorable Paul Broun (R-GA), Ranking Member**  
Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight  
*“Camp Lejeune: Contamination and Compensation, Looking Back, Moving Forward”*  
September 16, 2010

Good morning. I want to thank our witnesses for appearing today. I also want to thank the Chairman for holding this hearing. As a Marine, family doctor, and a legislator, I am very sensitive to the health of our service members, our veterans, and their families. We owe them a debt of gratitude for their service, a debt that must include vigilance in caring for them after leaving the military.

Camp Lejeune has a proud history of training Marines to defend our nation. Unfortunately, throughout that history, the drinking water consumed on Camp Lejeune was contaminated with numerous chemicals such as TCE, DCE, PCE, and benzene. Since the early 1990s, there have been multiple agencies that have looked into this issue, including ATSDR, EPA, GAO, and the National Academies -- to name just a few.

In 1997, ATSDR issued a Public Health Assessment required under the Superfund statute. This Assessment was eventually retracted in 2009 because of new information on the amount of benzene contamination that may challenge the results of the 1997 study. However, since that initial report was issued, ATSDR has initiated several other studies related to the effects of these chemicals on fetuses and the subsequent health problems of children born to mothers living and working on the base.

ATSDR is the principle investigator of the health effects related to the contamination at Camp Lejeune, and there are positive steps being taken to ensure that the agency has all the information it needs to evaluate the exposures and potential health impacts, but all parties must continue to cooperate.

The Navy and Marine Corps have become more forthcoming with documents and data, and ATSDR is working to improve their processes and – I hope -- their document retention protocols. While I am pleased that ATSDR is continuing to look at the issue, and that the VA seems to be moving in a proactive manner to ensure veterans and their families are taken care of, this issue won't simply go away. Progress needs to continue to a successful conclusion.

When the chemicals were discovered in the water supply, the Navy and the Marine Corps shut down the contaminated wells. Whether or not this reaction was immediate or permanent is not as important as the fact that we now know that possibly hundreds of thousands may have been exposed to harmful chemicals that could have lasting impacts on their health. When our service members provide a blanket of security for us abroad, they reasonably expect us to ensure their safety, as well as the safety of their families, at home - even if the threat is from environmental hazards. Fulfilling that expectation is the LEAST we can do.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses and yield back the balance of my time.

Thank you.

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