

Testimony in Support of SF1703

- SF1703 Titled “Atomic Veterans Day” - July 16th.

Who:

- NAAV (National Association of Atomic Veterans) was founded in 1979 for Atomic Veterans, their spouses and children to speak with one voice to Atomic Veteran issues and interests.
- Speaking on behalf of Atomic Veterans and NAAV is Keith Kiefer the NAAV National Vice Commander and NAAV Minnesota State Co-commander.
- An Atomic Veteran in general as defined by 38 CFR is:

An Atomic Veteran is defined in legislation as a Veteran who, as part of his or her military service:

- Participated in an above-ground nuclear test, 1945–1962; or
- Was part of the U.S. military occupation forces in/around Hiroshima/Nagasaki before 1946; or
- Was held as a POW in or near Hiroshima or Nagasaki (certain cases).
Approximately 200,000 to 350,000 participants.

- NAAV also recognizes radiation risk Activities such as:
 - 1977-1980 Enewetak Atoll Radiological Cleanup Project (approx. 4023 participants).
 - Veterans handling/exposed to DU (Depleted Uranium) weapons (unknown # participants).
 - Veterans involved with the Fukushima Disaster or stationed near Fukushima March 12 to May 11, 2011 (nearly 70,000).
 - Veterans stationed on nuclear ships, subs. or handling nuclear weapons (unknown # participants).

What:

- A day to recognize veterans that may have been exposed to Ionization Radiation.
- Ionization Radiation if exposed is an invisible bullet not leaving a clear entry or exit wound and can take decades for the damage to be manifested. (If a conventional wound veteran would be eligible for a Purple Heart.)

Why:

- July 16th 1944 was the date of the first atomic bomb dropped, code named Trinity in New Mexico.
- These Veterans, many intentionally, were placed in harms way to study the psychological and physical effects of nuclear weapons and the veteran and families sacrifice(s) have not been recognized.
- In 1983 Proclamation 5072 (declaring July 16th as National Atomic Veterans Day) passed in the US House and Senate unanimously and was signed by President Regan July 15, 1983 unfortunately it did not contain the text “and every year hereafter”. As a result it was not celebrated that year due to the late notice.
- NAAV continues working on getting national perpetual legislation passed. In conjunction NAAV has been getting State legislation Passed (approximately twelve States have passed legislation).
- In 2016 the Minnesota Senate and House of Representatives independently passed Resolutions declaring July 16th 2016 Atomic Veterans Day and the Governor issued a proclamation declaring July 16th 2016 Atomic Veterans Day.