

ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION No. 263

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JUNE 1, 2021

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman VINCENT MAZZEO

District 2 (Atlantic)

Assemblywoman CLEOPATRA G. TUCKER

District 28 (Essex)

Assemblyman JOHN ARMATO

District 2 (Atlantic)

Co-Sponsored by:

**Assemblymen Benson, Wirths, Space, Freiman, Assemblywoman Swain and
Assemblyman Tully**

SYNOPSIS

Urges US Congress pass “K2 Veterans Care Act of 2021.”

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/24/2021)

AR263 MAZZEO, TUCKER

2

- 1 **AN ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION** urging the United States Congress to
2 pass the “K2 Veterans Care Act of 2021.”
3
- 4 **WHEREAS**, A presumption of service connection occurs when the
5 Department of Veterans Affairs presumes a disability is caused by
6 military service in order for a veteran to receive disability
7 compensation; and
- 8 **WHEREAS**, When a presumption of service connection has not been
9 established, a veteran seeking disability compensation must present
10 specific evidence of the current disability, the occurrence during
11 service, and a link between the claimed condition and military
12 service; and
- 13 **WHEREAS**, United States Senate Bill No. 454 and House of
14 Representatives Bill No. 1355, “The K2 Veterans Care Act of 2021,”
15 was introduced in the Senate on February 25, 2021, by Senator
16 Richard Blumenthal and the House of Representatives on February
17 25, 2021, by Representative Stephen F. Lynch in order to provide
18 healthcare and benefits to veterans who were exposed to toxic
19 substances while serving as members of the Armed Forces at Karshi-
20 Khanabad Air Base in Uzbekistan; and
- 21 **WHEREAS**, As part of the Global War on Terror, the United States
22 stationed service members at the Karshi-Khanabad, commonly
23 called K2, Air Base in Uzbekistan from October 2001 until
24 November 2005; and
- 25 **WHEREAS**, While serving at K2, service members may have been
26 exposed to jet fuel, volatile organic compounds, particulate matter
27 and dust, depleted uranium, asbestos, and lead based paint; and
- 28 **WHEREAS**, It is thought that these toxins originated from leaks in the
29 Soviet-era underground fuel-distribution system and from the Soviet
30 nuclear missiles at the base; and
- 31 **WHEREAS**, Service members at K2 were not aware of these exposures,
32 but witnessed such things as “black goo” coming out of the ground
33 and a local pond that glowed green; and
- 34 **WHEREAS**, The Department of Defense conducted a study of cancer
35 outcomes for individuals who had served at K2 that indicated service
36 members who were stationed at K2 may have a higher risk for certain
37 cancers, and the Department of Defense and the Department of
38 Veterans Affairs are continuing to conduct follow-up studies while
39 there remains no presumption of service connection for service
40 members who served at K2 and toxic exposure-related illnesses and
41 diseases; and
- 42 **WHEREAS**, Currently, each claim asserted by a veteran for a disability
43 related to service at K2 is evaluated on a case-by-case basis, this
44 legislation would eliminate the hurdle of proving a nexus between
45 the veteran’s service and their illness or disease by establishing a,
46 presumption of service connection for a veteran who served at K2
47 and is diagnosed with a toxic exposure-related illness or disease; and

1 **WHEREAS**, Access to hospital care, medical services, and nursing home
2 care would be made available to service members through this
3 legislation; and

4 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey is grateful for the sacrifices that members of the
5 military and their families have made in service to this nation, and
6 recognizes that they have sacrificed their health in service and
7 deserve to be taken care of during and after their service; now,
8 therefore,

9
10 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the General Assembly of the State of New
11 Jersey:

12

13 1. This House respectfully urges the United States Congress pass
14 S.454 and H.R.1355, the “K2 Veterans Care Act of 2021.”

15

16 2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State,
17 shall be transmitted by the Clerk of the General Assembly to the
18 Speaker and Minority Leader of the United States House of
19 Representatives, the Majority and Minority Leaders in the United
20 States Senate, and every member of Congress elected from this State.

21

22

23

STATEMENT

24

25 This resolution urges the United States Congress to pass the “K2
26 Veterans Care Act of 2021” in order to allow veterans who were
27 exposed to toxic substances while serving at Karshi-Khanabad Air
28 Base in Uzbekistan to receive healthcare and benefits.

29 The United States military stationed service members at K2 from
30 October 2001 to November 2005. While there, service members may
31 have been exposed to jet fuel, volatile organic compounds,
32 particulate matter and dust, depleted uranium, asbestos, and lead
33 based paint without their knowledge. These toxic exposures may
34 lead to a higher risk of certain cancers. This legislation would give
35 service members the presumption of service connection for those
36 who served at K2 and have been diagnosed with toxic exposure-
37 related illnesses and diseases and access to hospital care, medical
38 services, and nursing home care. Service members have sacrificed
39 to serve this nation and deserve to receive healthcare and benefits for
40 the hazards they faced during their service.