

Republicans Betray Veterans Out of Spite

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The PACT Act extends healthcare coverage for more than 3 million veterans exposed to toxins from burn pits in Iraq and Agent Orange in Vietnam. It passed the Senate [on June 16](#) by an 84-14 vote, and the House [on July 13](#) by 342-88. Because the House version made some technical corrections to the bill, it went back to the Senate for another vote yesterday. That's when 41 Republican senators stabbed our veterans in the back and blocked it.

So, what changed? Nothing of substance in the bill. What changed was [Sen. Joe Manchin's willingness to support the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022](#). It's completely unrelated to the PACT Act, but Republicans are afraid it will rob them of their favorite talking point.

As the [Military Times put it](#): "A surprise deal on health care and environmental policies announced by Senate Democratic leaders Wednesday afternoon produced an unexpected casualty: the comprehensive toxic exposure legislation veterans' advocates expected to pass this week."

That's right, Republican senators, upset that Democrats found a way to pass a bill they oppose, took it out on sick veterans.

"If you have the guts to send somebody to war, then you better have the guts to take care of them when they get home," [said Senate Veterans' Affairs Chairman Jon Tester](#), a Montana Democrat.

"If we don't take care of our veterans when they come home, they're going to say, 'Why should I ever sign the dotted line? Because the promises I made and the promises the country made, only half that deal is being respected.'"

["Veterans are going to die,"](#) Tester added. "They're not going to get their benefits; they're not going to get their health care."

That didn't matter to Republicans.

What mattered was retaliating against Democrats the only way they could: holding veterans hostage to exact political revenge. Republicans should be ashamed.

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