



# » POLICY & GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

## MENTAL HEALTH AND TOXIC EXPOSURE RESEARCH

The health challenges facing each generation of injured veterans and service members are shaped by the demands of their service. The newest generation of wounded warriors faces challenges based on the battlefield experience in Iraq and Afghanistan. In order for these challenges to be understood and addressed, more research is needed.

- ★ Veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts were exposed to a variety of environmental hazards through toxic particles in dust and sand, chemicals in fuel and exhaust fumes, and industrial accidents. Some of the most serious hazards came from burn pits used to dispose of waste. Congress, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and Department of Defense (DOD) should continue and expand efforts to research the effects of these hazards on the post-9/11 veteran and service member population.
- ★ Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI) are the signature injuries of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts. More research is needed about these injuries, particularly regarding medium- and long-term effects, treatment strategies, and necessary care. Congress, VA, and DOD should continue and expand efforts to understand and address these issues.

