

November 8, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

In honor of their advocacy that secured lifesaving care and benefits for our nation's first responders and veterans, I write to respectfully recommend Cpt. Le Roy Torres, Rosie Torres, Jon Stewart, and John Feal for the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

I first met John Feal and Jon Stewart in 2010, as part of my efforts to secure health care for 9/11 first responders. John Feal, himself a military veteran, was injured as part of 9/11 clean-up efforts. Their work was essential to passing the *James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act* and the *Never Forget the Heroes: James Zadroga, Ray Pfeifer, and Luis Alvarez Permanent Authorization of the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund Act*, two key pieces of legislation that ensured health care for 9/11 first responders. Because of them, the men and women who answered the call on one of the most devastating days in our country's history are receiving the care that they deserve.

As the cofounders of Burn Pits 360, Rosie and Cpt. Le Roy Torres have educated the public for years about the dangers that burn pits and other toxins pose to service members. It is their work that has improved our country's ability to provide better care to service members, including through the establishment of a burn pits registry. Le Roy and Rosie also successfully fought to protect the rights of disabled veterans, with the Supreme Court ruling in their favor in *Torres v. Texas Department of Public Safety*. Their greatest legislative achievement on behalf of our men and women in uniform is the *Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our PACT Act*—the transformative legislation that will provide presumptive care to nearly 3.5 million veterans exposed to toxic burn pits—the centerpiece of which was our *Presumptive Benefits for War Fighters Exposed to Burn Pits and Other Toxins Act*.

Rosie, Le Roy, John and Jon worked with me on this legislation from the very beginning, when the possibilities seemed dim. However, they continued to do the hard work, knowing that doing the right thing on behalf of our service members was worth it. They lobbied lawmakers, won over coalition partners, and pressed the issue before the public. They had no interest in the politics and public spectacle that came with lobbying for this crucial piece of legislation, but never backed down from what was necessary—including camping out on the Capitol steps to save the PACT Act when it faced a setback this summer.

Because of John, Jon, Le Roy, and Rosie's tireless work, millions of American veterans and service members are eligible for life-saving care for injuries that occurred as a result of their service and sacrifice. Because of them, millions of Americans may have more precious time on this Earth with their loved ones. They have shown how a small group of like-minded and passionate citizens can overcome any obstacle to transform millions of lives for the better, demonstrating the power of possibility that can only exist in the United States.

I am honored to recommend these four for their incredible contributions to American life. I thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kirsten Gillibrand". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator