



THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
WASHINGTON DC 20350-1000

June 30, 2023

The Honorable Ted P. Budd
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Budd:

Thank you for your letter dated April 17, 2023, concerning Camp Lejeune Justice Act (CLJA) claims and litigation. The Department of the Navy (DON) has been and remains committed to addressing as expeditiously as possible, the claims of our Service Members, civilian employees, their families, and others who may have been harmed by drinking contaminated water at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune. I have directed Under Secretary Erik Raven to personally oversee the DON's efforts in this regard.

To date, the DON has received over 70,000 CLJA claims. The Navy has initiated processing of more than 17,000 of the claims received and anticipates making some settlement recommendations to the Department of Justice (DOJ) in the coming weeks. Given the sums at issue, the DOJ is required to approve all settlement recommendations.

The DON is addressing manning and information technology (IT) needs to manage the unprecedented number of claims received. Historically, tort claims against the DON have been addressed by the Office of the Judge Advocate General (OJAG) Tort Claims Unit (TCU), an office of 22 permanent employees that processes roughly 2,000 claims annually. Given the volume of CLJA claims, the Judge Advocate General (JAG) of the Navy established a new unit within the OJAG, the Camp Lejeune Claims Task Force (CLCTF), which is dedicated solely to processing and adjudicating CLJA claims. The task force will initially include approximately 100 personnel, including claims attorneys, paralegals, claims adjusters, IT specialists, and other support staff. Ultimately, the CLCTF is designed to be scalable relative to the number of claims received by the Navy as there is currently no reliable estimate of the total number of anticipated claims. The CLCTF is already manned by 50 active and reserve Service Members and civilian legal experts from the Navy JAG Corps, Marine Corps legal community, and the Navy Office of General Counsel.

In addition to personnel hiring actions, the Navy is aggressively pursuing IT solutions to optimize claims filing and processing. Even before CLJA was signed into law in August 2022, OJAG conducted market research to identify software solutions to handle CLJA claims. The day after CLJA was enacted, the Navy began claims intake using a SharePoint Online program developed locally by TCU, and processing began immediately upon receipt of the first claim. Two days after the law was signed by the President, the Navy secured a contract for software development and fielding. Phase one of that program, which will accommodate online single claim filing and data management, will roll out by the end of July. Phase two will streamline intake and management of batch-filed or bulk claims and is expected to come online by the end of September. Additionally, we are actively exploring IT solutions to further automate claims processing through the use of artificial intelligence.

The standup of the CLCTF, the hiring of additional manpower, and the procurement of IT solutions will allow the Navy to more expeditiously process CLJA claims. As manning dedicated to CLJA claims adjudication increases, processing times will be expedited.

Additionally, the DON is working to identify potential legislative amendments to CLJA that will streamline processing even further.

Due to the timing of enactment of the CLJA, the Navy Office of Budget was not able to include the manning and IT requirements discussed above in budget proposals for fiscal year 2024. Current funding requirements are being addressed with existing appropriations.

Thank you for your support of the Navy as we respond to the increasing number of CLJA claims. The Navy is dedicated to processing these claims as quickly and efficiently as possible and will continue to coordinate with other federal agencies, including the DOJ and the Veterans Administration, to do so.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Carlos Del Toro", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Carlos Del Toro