



Rep. Tom Emmer on Emmer Speaks in Support of his Atomic Veterans Service Medals Act

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****REP. TOM EMMER:**

** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to thank my colleague from Massachusetts, Mr. McGovern, for yielding. I appreciate the opportunity to work with him on this important issue. During my time in Congress, I've been privileged to meet with many of our nation's veterans. The men and women in our armed forces are true heroes and truly the best our nation has to offer. Yet far too often, they do not get the recognition and credit they deserve. This is especially true when it comes to our nation's atomic veterans. From 1945 to 1960, nearly a quarter of a million of our service members played a role in the testing of nuclear weapons, earning them the title of atomic veterans. Since 1990, our federal government has taken different approaches to try and recognize and thank our atomic veterans, but we have never given official recognition through an award or medal. Today, that will change with the support of the men and women in this chamber. With the McGovern-Emmer Amendment, we have an opportunity to finally acknowledge the incredible sacrifice these courageous individuals made more than half a century ago. Our amendment will require the Department of Defense to issue a service medal to the veterans or surviving families of those members of our armed forces who participated in above-ground nuclear weapons testing, were part of the U.S. military occupation forces in or around Hiroshima and Nagasaki before 1946, or were held as POWs in or near Hiroshima or Nagasaki. This amendment has been included in the House NDAA bill for the past two years and is supported by the National Association of Atomic Veterans. These veterans left their homes, left their families, and put their lives on the line to protect the freedoms and liberties we enjoy each and every day. I'm honored to work with Mr. McGovern and our colleagues here in the House to ensure these brave soldiers get the recognition they deserve. Again, I want to thank Congressman McGovern for his efforts on this issue, as well as to thank Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Smith, and the entire staff of the House Armed Services Committee for their work on the underlying bill. I urge adoption of this amendment and I yield back the remainder of my time.

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