

LARSON URGES RESOLUTION OF VIEQUES CLAIMS

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WASHINGTON, D.C. -- U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) today urged action to remedy the damages done to the island of Vieques, Puerto Rico.

Larson stated: "During its six decades of bombing Vieques, the Navy's use of live ordinance containing heavy metals and chemical compounds caused damage to the island and major health problems for its residents. Studies have shown that the people of Vieques suffer from cancer and other diseases at much higher rates than those elsewhere in Puerto Rico.

"The residents of Vieques have just claims pending before the Department of the Navy. A speedy and fair resolution of these claims will allow the people of Vieques to move on with their lives and protect their health from further damage. I also support a prompt and full cleanup and decontamination of the island. The people of Vieques have paid a high price for the military weapons testing that has gone on there. As American citizens, they deserve better," said Larson.

Beginning in the 1940s, Vieques was used for naval gunfire support and air-to-ground ordnance training. Larson became a vocal opponent of continued live-fire training on the island when a Navy contract employee was accidentally killed in 1999. Larson visited the island in 2000 to gain first hand knowledge of life there and the complications that arose from the testing exercises conducted by the military. He also wrote to Presidents Clinton and George W. Bush several times asking that military training on the small island be ended. The Navy ceased all military operations on May 1, 2003.

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