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January 30, 2023

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

Dear President Biden:

I recommend you award the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Rosie and Le Roy Torres of Robstown, Texas for their historic achievements to transform the landscape for veterans benefits and protect the rights of returning servicemembers. Through Rosie and Le Roy, millions of veterans impacted by burn pits have the health care they deserve, and veterans have recourse against state government discrimination. Over the past decade, Rosie and Le Roy have played a central role in ensuring the United States upholds our commitment to veterans. They successfully fought for the passage of two federal laws to protect veterans impacted by burn pits and secured a victory for disabled veterans at the Supreme Court.

Rosie and Le Roy have spent their lives in service to our country. Before the couple embarked on their advocacy journey, Rosie had a 20-year career at the Department of Veterans Affairs and Le Roy served in the Army Reserves and worked as a Texas State Trooper.

In 2007, the United States government deployed Le Roy to Balad, Iraq where he breathed in toxic fumes from burn pits for a year. When he returned to Texas in 2008, he was diagnosed with a lung condition from his burn pit exposure and requested reasonable accommodations to continue his work at the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS). Instead, the Department denied his request and forced him to resign. Le Roy then sued the DPS for not abiding by *the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act*, a law meant to protect veterans against employment discrimination. The Supreme Court eventually ruled with Le Roy in *Torres v. Texas Department of Public Safety*, which greatly expanded the rights of veterans. Because the Torres family chose to fight, thousands of disabled veterans have recourse against discrimination from their employer.

In 2010, Rosie and Le Roy founded BurnPits 360 to advocate for the federal government to meet the needs of servicemembers and veterans affected by toxic burn pits.

Since its founding, BurnPits 360 has had remarkable achievements, including:

- **2010:** BurnPits 360 established an independent registry for veterans to report their suffering and denial of healthcare benefits.
- **2013:** After years of lobbying by BurnPits 360 and other veterans' groups, President Obama signed a national burn pit registry into law, creating a centralized place for veterans to submit information about how burn pit exposure affected their health.
- **2017 and 2019:** BurnPits 360 organized congressional briefings to raise awareness about burn pits and to discuss Congress' ongoing legislative efforts to support veterans and those impacted by burn pits.
- **2022:** Rosie and Le Roy's decade-long legislative push culminated with the passage of the *Honoring our PACT Act of 2022*, a comprehensive and historic law that expands healthcare benefits for veterans.

Rosie and Le Roy define what it means to be American. I cannot think of two better people who deserve to receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress