



Legislative Alert #113-13: SUPPORT H.R. 32 & S. 734, Military Surviving Spouses Legislation VETERANS

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Issue Background: Currently, the Department of Defense's (DOD's) Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) is offset, dollar-for-dollar, by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) plan, which is not what Congress had originally intended. This offset, also known as the "widow's tax," affects approximately 60,000 widows and widowers of our Armed Forces. The \$1,215 they receive in DIC from the VA gets dramatically reduced from the SBP annuity, oftentimes causing financial strain upon military spouse's reliance on such compensation. The spouses of those who have given the ultimate sacrifice in the defense of their nation must bear both the emotional and economic burden of surviving without their loved one. While nothing can replace what was lost, it is the duty of our nation to provide benefits for the family of a fallen hero.

Action Required: Contact your Senators and Representatives and urge them to support and cosponsor H.R. 32, introduced by Representative Joe Wilson (R-SC-02) and S. 734, introduced by Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL), military surviving spouses legislation which would amend Title 10, United States Code, to repeal the requirement for reduction of survivor annuities under the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) for military surviving spouses that offsets the receipt of Veterans dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC).

Details (To Be Put Into Letter): As it exists today, surviving spouses of an Active Duty or retired servicemember who dies from a service-connected condition currently receives compensation in Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). However, if the servicemember who died was also a retiree who was enrolled in the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) at the Department of Defense (DOD), DIC is deducted dollar by dollar from the SBP annuity. This deduction is commonly known as the "widow's tax" and affects over 60,000 widows and widowers of the military community.

H.R. 32 and S. 734 are great bills that would repeal the offset of DIC payments from SBP annuities, in the belief that when service caused the death, the VA indemnity payment should be added to the normal SBP annuity, not subtracted from it. Federal civilian employees have SBP's but do not face the same offset in case of death like the families of servicemembers do. Because of the tremendous sacrifices military servicemembers and their families make every day by serving in the Armed Forces, our nation should provide them with the appropriate benefits, and at the very least, equal to

those of Federal civilian employees. Without the support of the military spouse, many of our brave men and woman in uniform would not be able to have the strong support they need and stay focused during difficult training and deployments. The spouse of a service member can be just as vital to the defense of our country as the man or women in uniform by providing the support and morale that encourages our servicemembers to give all they can. Our nation must honor the sacrifices of our service members and protect those they leave behind and our military spouses should not have to face having one benefit count against another.

Take Action: Click the “Take Action” link at the top of the Alert to immediately email and/or write to your Senators and Representatives. This is the quickest and most effective method of expressing your views to Congress. You can also write and/or e-mail the ‘Details’ section or edit as you desire for a more personalized communication . Also, contact friends and family and urge them to use the Contact Congress feature on AUSN’s website as well. Please direct any questions concerning this issue to our Director of Legislation, Anthony Wallis, at 703-548-5800 or at Anthony.Wallis@ausn.org.