



Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.

Martha M. Didamo, Board Chair
1410 Cascio Drive · Bellevue, NE 68005-2317

The Honorable Solomon Ortiz, TX
U. S. House of Representatives
Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC, 22015

Dear Representative Ortiz:

On behalf of the members of Gold Star Wives of America, Inc., we are writing to support your sponsorship of a companion House bill to S. 935, introduced by Senator Bill Nelson, Florida, and 15 co-sponsors on March 20, 2007.

Your legislation eliminates the dollar-for-dollar reduction of the Department of Defense's Survivor Benefit (SBP) by the Department of Veterans Affairs Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC). We also appreciate the provision to provide a "Paid-up SBP" for the "greatest generation" retirees.

Disabled military retirees demonstrated prudent retirement planning to provide for their surviving spouses by voluntarily electing to purchase SBP (6 ½ % of military retired pay) to assure a continuation of a portion of retirement pay after their death. SBP was often selected because these disabled retirees were not otherwise eligible for additional life insurance because of their service related pre-existing conditions. These surviving spouses often dedicated their lives to the rigorous demands of daily care for their loved ones.

There are 4,000 surviving spouses of active duty deaths. An estimated 1,000 of these surviving spouses since 10-07-01 are permitted to forfeit their own SBP lifetime benefit and select the child SBP option to avoid the DIC offset in order to provide income necessary to raise their children. It is wrong for these young families to be forced by our government to use their own survivor benefit to feed the family now. Gold Star Wives appreciates the bill's provision for these young widow(er)s to transfer the traditional military survivor benefit back to themselves.

Congress has established precedents for eliminating offsets which reduce employer provided benefits with "concurrent receipts" or the "Disabled tax" legislation that has eliminated the reduction of military retired pay by the VA's disability compensation for disabled military retirees with a 50% disability and above.

Gold Star Wives of America, Inc., Congressionally Chartered by Congress, is an organization of surviving spouses of any person of the United States military who died while a member of the armed forces of our country, or who died subsequent to such service as a result of an injury or disability incurred during such service. Gold Star Wives was founded in New York State in 1945 by Mrs. Marie Speer, who now resides in Corpus Christi, Texas. Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, then a recent widow herself, was also a charter member of the founding GSW board of directors.

Sincerely,



Martha Didamo, Chairman
Board of Directors
Gold Star Wives of America, Inc
Bellevue, Nebraska

Rose Elizabeth Lee, Chairman
Government Relations Committee
Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.
Arlington, Virginia
www.goldstarwives.org