

STATEMENT OF
MARY ANN STEWART
SOCIETY OF MILITARY WIDOWS
CHAPTER 30, EL PASO, TEXAS

BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON BENEFITS
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

EL PASO, TEXAS

APRIL 26, 2002

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

As a member of the Society of Military Widows, I appreciate the support you have given us, but we still need your help and your voice in Washington. We have some eligible SBP/DIC widows in our organization, and we have trouble understanding why some of the senators and representatives who cosponsored the "Retired Pay Restoration Bills" have failed to also support The Military Widow's Equity Act by cosponsoring H.R. 3183 and S.1506.

This bill would eliminate the widows having to forfeit a dollar of their SBP (Survivor Benefit Plan) annuity for every DIC (Dependency and Indemnity Compensation) dollar they receive. The widows of disabled military survivors who have been unable to work or restrict their own employment because of the need to care for their disabled husbands. The DIC is offset against the SBP annuity and the related SBP premium is refunded to the surviving spouse without interest. The SBP premium is refunded in a lump sum and this often places a widow in a onetime higher income tax bracket.

The military member voluntarily chose to purchase SBP for his spouse and family, not realizing there would be an offset for his widow, should his cause of death be the result of a service-connected disability. Federal civilian widows are not penalized with a DIC offset. Military surviving spouses should be treated the same.

Military widows' husbands who chose military service as their career were very dedicated to our country. We moved frequently in the United States and sometimes overseas, and during wartime were separated for years. The stay-at-home-wives became caregivers when their disabled husbands needed care for their service related illness. I along with other widows would appreciate your understanding and support of these bills.