

H.R. 6047: The Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

CHAIRMAN MIKE BOST

BACKGROUND:

The Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act of 2026, as amended introduced by Rep. Tom Barrett (R-MI) would create a significant increase in benefits for a forgotten group of veterans and their families for the first time in over 20 years.

Sharri Briley is the surviving spouse of CW3 Donovan Lee 'Bull' Briley, an Army Special Operations Blackhawk helicopter pilot who tragically lost his life in Mogadishu, Somalia during Operation Gothic Serpent while providing aviation support to the ground forces that were a part of a United Nations peacekeeping mission objective at the time in 1993. Donovan and his fellow soldiers' actions inspired the movie *Black Hawk Down* and his story of service continues to be told today. Following her husband's death, Sharri Briley has made it her mission to honor fallen servicemembers by ensuring the families left behind are never forgotten and they receive the survivor benefits they have earned. Surviving spouses like Sharri Briley would directly benefit from the expansions this bill would make to VA survivor benefits.

Sergeant Eric Edmundson is an Army veteran whose vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device (IED) on October 2, 2005, in Iraq. Eric sustained lifechanging injuries including an anoxic brain injury which changed the course of his life by ending his ability to speak or walk. Despite these challenges, Eric continues to lead a full life through enhanced medical technology and therapy. Sergeant Edmundson's wife, and his parents serve as his full-time caregivers to allow him to still do the things he enjoys, including going to the gym, doing yoga, painting, and spending quality time with his two children. Families of catastrophically disabled veterans like the Edmundson's would directly benefit from the benefits expansions this bill would make to allow veterans like Eric to live comfortably in exchange for their service in uniform.

The Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act would –

- **Increase the base-rate of survivors' monthly support payment by an additional 1.5% over two years, with a 1% increase the first year and a 0.5% increase the second year. This increase is on top of the yearly adjustment for inflation, providing survivors with the first non-inflation increase since 1993.**
- The bill would also significantly raise the monthly benefits rate for catastrophically service-connected disabled veterans with a traumatic brain injury or other severe disabilities that require regular, round the clock, in-home medical care, offering an additional \$10,000 annually.
- **Over the next five years, over 500,000 disabled veterans and their families would be positively impacted by these changes.** This bill would be the first significant increase for this cohort of veterans in decades.

For years, Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) have emphasized the need for improved benefits for catastrophically injured veterans, their families, and their survivors. **This bill would answer the call from VSOs for veterans, dependents, catastrophically injured veterans needing in-home care, and veterans' survivors receiving VA DIC benefits to grant them the benefits they have earned.**

The Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act is fully offset.

THE MESSAGE:

- *The Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act* would transform the lives of over **500,000 veterans and their families**, filling crucial gaps in VA benefits delivery.
- American hero's families like the Briley's and the Edmundson's – and the hundreds of thousands more like them – should never have to worry if they will be able to make ends meet.
- *The Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act* would deliver vital support to the catastrophically injured, widows, dependents, and survivors, many of whom have not seen their benefits properly expanded in decades.
- *The Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act* would enhance the lives of veterans living with limb loss, severe disabilities, quadriplegia, paraplegia, and their families to deliver on the debt we owe to those who have served.