

February 9, 2026

The Honorable Mike Bost
Chairman
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mark Takano
Ranking Member
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman & Ranking Member,

As the second session of the 119th Congress begins and the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs continues its work providing for the needs of our nation's ill and injured veterans, their caregivers, and survivors, we write to share our strong support for the amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 6407, the Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act. As you proceed with discussions around this bill, we urge you to remember those with whom the bill is intended to help – *veterans with the profoundest of injuries and the survivors who have lost their loved ones.*

Provisions in this important legislation would increase the amount of Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) by \$10,000 annually for the most severely disabled veterans and raise the rate of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) by a total of 1.5 percent over a period of two years for the surviving family members of deceased servicemembers and veterans.

SMC is arguably the most important ancillary benefit for veterans with severe, service-connected disabilities. To be clear, given the extreme nature of the disabilities incurred by most veterans in receipt of SMC, we do not believe that the impact on quality of life can be totally compensated for; however, SMC does at least provide these veterans an opportunity to have the financial resources to accommodate their individual needs.

DIC is intended to protect against survivor impoverishment after the death of a service-connected veteran. These monthly payments were intended to provide surviving spouses with the means to maintain some semblance of economic stability after the loss of their loved one. DIC is also an indemnity payment from the government for the loss of life. Unfortunately, without an immediate increase, many survivors who, in many cases were once caregivers, face a financial cliff with catastrophic results. This legislation represents an initial downpayment on what is truly owed to veterans' survivors, and we are committed to continuing to work to bring DIC in parity with other federal survivor benefits.

Congress established the baseline rates for these crucial programs decades ago and updating them is long overdue. The time to act is now. For decades, the veteran community has urged Congress to strengthen these critical support programs and increasing SMC and DIC would be the first step in helping our most severely disabled and their survivors. Passing this important legislation will provide critical relief to these communities and we look forward to your swift action.

Sincerely,

Paralyzed Veterans of America
Elizabeth Dole Foundation
Wounded Warrior Project

Disabled American Veterans
Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors
Military Officers Association of America

Jewish War Veterans of the USA
Vietnam Veterans Association
Quality of Life Foundation
Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.
Commissioned Officers Association of the
USPHS
AMVETS

The Independence Fund
Military Order of the Purple Heart
Blinded Veterans Association
Fleet Reserve Association
Marine Corps League
Gold Star Spouses of America
Armed Forces Retiree Association