



T H E M I L I T A R Y C O A L I T I O N

201 North Washington Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
(703) 838-8113

May 18, 2005

The Honorable Duncan Hunter
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Military Coalition (TMC), a consortium of nationally prominent uniformed services and veteran's organizations representing more than 5.5 million current and former members of the seven uniformed services, plus their families and survivors, is writing to urge your Committee to increase the military death gratuity to \$100,000 for all service men and women whose death is considered "in the line of duty", rather than just those whose deaths are due directly to the performance of military duty.

Ultimately, this issue is about taking care of military families. Earlier this year, leaders of all four military services recommended against discriminating against the survivors of military members whose deaths were caused by service conditions other than combat. "A death is a death," they said, and TMC strongly agrees. The family's loss is the same, regardless of the combat or non-combat circumstances of the death. The compensation is for the family, and the family's needs should not be viewed as lower because the death did not occur in combat. Members who survived multiple combat tours but died of other service-connected causes rendered no less service, and their life was of no less value to their country.

Most employers provide cost-free insurance – normally capped at some six-figure amount – as an employee benefit, in addition to whatever insurance may be available to the employee for purchase. The survivor of a federal civilian who dies in service receives a gratuity payment of about \$26,000 plus one-half the employee's annual salary. TMC believes the death gratuity should serve a similar purpose for military members. A \$12,450 payment for non-combat deaths falls far short of this standard.

The Military Coalition strongly recommends that you and the Committee support the same \$100,000 death gratuity for all active duty deaths covered by the traditional "line of duty" definition. We believe the same uniform eligibility should be applied to the retroactive SGLI increase (special death gratuity) for similar reasons.

Sincerely,

The Military Coalition
(Signatures enclosed)

cc: Ranking Member and Members, House Armed Services Committee