



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

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May 14, 2007

The Honorable Bill Nelson  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Nelson:

The Military Coalition (TMC), a consortium of nationally prominent military and veterans organizations, representing more than 5.5 million members plus their families and survivors, is writing in support of your bill S 935. It addresses two significant problems with the military Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP). The first is the dollar-for-dollar deduction of VA benefits for service-connected deaths from the survivors' SBP annuities. The second is the delayed effective date of 30-year paid-up SBP coverage, which imposes undue financial penalties on the earliest SBP enrollees. Correction of these remaining survivor benefit inequities is a top legislative goal for TMC in 2007. The Military Coalition commends your faithful support of these issues over the past several years.

We support your view that if military service caused a retired member's death, the Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC) the VA pays the survivor should be added to the SBP benefits the retiree paid for, not substituted for them. In the case of members killed on active duty, a surviving spouse with children can avoid the dollar-for-dollar offset only by assigning SBP to the children. But that forces the spouse to give up any SBP claim after the children attain their majority – leaving the spouse with only a \$1,067 monthly annuity from the VA. Surely, those who give their lives for their country deserve fairer compensation for their surviving spouses. We appreciate the bill's foresight in extending the eligibility for receiving both SBP and DIC payments to those widows who had previously made the choice of the child-only option for SBP.

As for paid-up SBP, the 2008 effective date in existing law allows those who retired after 1978 to stop paying SBP premiums once they have paid for 30 years and attained age 70. But tens of thousands of "Greatest Generation" retirees who signed up for SBP as early as 1972 – and who paid nearly two decades of higher premiums before the premium reduction in 1990 – will have to pay premiums for up to 36 years. TMC supports your initiative to remedy this inequity by advancing the effective date to October 1, 2007.

The Military Coalition very much appreciates your leadership in campaigning to restore equity to this very important survivor program, and we look forward to working closely with you in seeking maximum cosponsorship for S 935—and timely enactment of it.

Sincerely,

The Military Coalition

(Signatures Enclosed)

Air Force Association  
Air Force Sergeants Association  
Air Force Women Officers Associated  
American Logistics Association  
AMVETS (American Veterans)  
Army Aviation Association of America  
Association of Military Surgeons of the United States  
Association of the United States Army  
Chief Warrant Officer and Warrant Officer Association, U.S. Coast Guard  
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc.  
Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States  
Fleet Reserve Association  
Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.  
Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America  
Marine Corps League  
Marine Corps Reserve Association  
Military Chaplains Association of the United States of America  
Military Officers Association of America  
Military Order of the Purple Heart  
National Association for Uniformed Services  
National Guard Association of the United States  
National Military Family Association  
National Order of Battlefield Commissions  
Naval Enlisted Reserve Association  
Naval Reserve Association  
Navy League of the United States  
Non Commissioned Officers Association  
Reserve Enlisted Association of the United States  
Reserve Officers Association  
Society of Medical Consultants to the Armed Forces  
The Retired Enlisted Association  
United States Army Warrant Officers Association  
United States Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers Association  
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States  
Veterans' Widows International Network