



Duckworth Helps Reintroduce Bipartisan Legislation to Eliminate the Military 'Widow's Tax'

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— U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) joined U.S. Senator Doug Jones (D-AL) in reintroducing the *Military Widow's Tax Elimination Act of 2019* to help more than 65,000 military widows across the country access the full survivor benefits earned by their fallen loved ones. Currently, these widows are prevented from receiving full benefits from both the Department of Defense's (DoD) Survivors Benefits Plan (SBP) and Veterans Affairs' (VA) Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC), even if their spouses had paid into both programs. U.S. Senators Susan Collins (R-ME), Jon Tester (D-MT) and Mike Crapo (R-ID) also helped introduce the legislation.

“Current law places an unfair burden on spouses who are already struggling with raising children, paying their mortgages and so much more. Our nation should be doing a better job of making sure military spouses are able to access to these benefits their fallen spouses paid into,” Duckworth said. **“That’s why I’m proud to support this bipartisan bill to fulfill our commitment to the spouses of the brave men and women who were willing to put their lives in danger to defend our country.”**

Under current law, the surviving spouse of a retired member who dies of a service-connected cause, or a servicemember killed on active duty, is entitled to DIC from the VA. However, if the military retiree was also enrolled in SBP, the surviving spouse's SBP benefits are reduced by the amount of DIC (currently \$1,319 per month). This leaves many widows and widowers with as little as 62% of the monthly benefits they had expected to receive to support their families after their loved one's passing. Each case varies depending on rank and the year of service-related death, but the average DIC offset to SBP pay is \$925 per month. The *Military Widow's Tax Elimination Act* would repeal this required offset and authorize payment of both SBP and DIC in the case of a service-connected death.

This legislation is supported by Veterans Service Organizations and advocacy groups such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Disabled American Veterans (DAV), the American Legion, Gold Star Wives of America, Inc., Military Officers Association of America, National Military Family Association, Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) and more.

In addition to Senators Duckworth, Jones, Collins, Tester and Crapo, cosponsors of the bill include Senators Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Michael Bennet (D-CO), Marsha Blackburn (R-TN), John Boozman (R-AR), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Bob Casey (D-PA), Chris Coons (D-DE), Kevin Cramer (R-ND), Kamala Harris (D-CA), John Hoeven (R-ND), Cindy Hyde-Smith (D-MS), James Inhofe (R-OK), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Joe Manchin (D-WV), Ed Markey (D-MA), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Patty Murray (D-WA), Gary Peters (D-MI), James Risch (R-ID), Marco Rubio (D-FL), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Ron Wyden (D-OR).