Caring for Survivors

In May, legislation was introduced that would enhance veterans’ survivor benefits—one of DAV’s critical legislative policy goals. The Caring for Survivors Act of 2020 (H.R. 6933) was introduced in the House by Reps. TJ Cox, Gil Cisneros, Ted Yoho, Jefferson Van Drew and Jahana Hayes. The DAV-supported bipartisan legislation aims to increase Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) for veterans’ surviving dependents and expand eligibility to allow certain survivors to receive this benefit who currently do not meet the requirements.

“One of the most important ways we honor our fallen service members and service-disabled veterans is by paying tribute to their survivors,” said National Commander Butch Whitehead. “We hope this bill will ease the burden on many veterans and their family members.”

Specifically, the Caring for Survivors Act of 2020 would:

- Increase the DIC rate to make it more equitable with rates provided to federal civilian employee survivors.
- Ease the 10-year rule for eligibility and replace it with a graduated scale of benefits that begins after five years and increases by percentage until reaching the full amount at the 10-year mark. If a veteran is rated as totally disabled for five years and dies as a result of a non-service-connected cause, a survivor would be entitled to 50% of total DIC benefits. This scale continues until the 10-year threshold and the maximum amount of DIC benefit is awarded.
- Reduce the age allowed for surviving spouses to remarry
and maintain their benefits from 57 to 55, consistent with other federal survivor programs.

DAV has had a longtime resolution adopted by our membership calling for improving veterans’ survivor benefits. The introduction of the Caring for Survivors Act follows the passage of the fiscal year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) signed into law last December. The NDAA contained a provision that will completely eliminate the existing Survivor Benefit Plan/Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (SBP/DIC) offset by January 2023.

“The significance of these benefits to veterans’ survivors cannot be overstated,” said Washington Headquarters Executive Director Randy Reese. “We’re pleased about the passage of survivor benefits legislation last year and now the introduction of the Caring for Survivors Act (H.R. 6933). We will continue to advocate on behalf of this bill and any other legislation that will support our nation’s heroes and their families.”

Learn more

DAV hosted a virtual bill introduction for H.R. 6933 to show our strong support for the legislation. See the video and read more about the Caring for Survivors Act at dav.la/1w4.

To advocate for the passage of this bill and follow along with updates to this and other legislation impacting the veterans community, join DAV CAN (Commander’s Action Network) at davcan.org.