

November 2nd, 2018

The Honorable Orrin Hatch
Chairman
Senate Committee on Finance
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Finance
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Hatch and Wyden,

The National Military & Veterans Alliance, a nonpartisan advocacy group of the undersigned military and veteran service organizations, urges your immediate action to advance S. 1461, Health Equity and Access for Returning Troops and Servicemembers (HEARTS) Act of 2018. We ask your committee to consider and order the bill reported for a vote on the Senate floor prior to the end of this congressional session. A companion bill, H.R. 6886 was passed by the House on September 28th.

Currently, the interaction between Social Security's disability program and the TRICARE program inadvertently ends up penalizing wounded veterans who return to work after recovering from severe injuries. As a result, many of our most seriously injured veterans eventually lose access to their traditional, affordable TRICARE and cannot regain it for years if they return to work.

When service members return home, they are eligible for TRICARE. They may also be eligible for Social Security Disability Insurance (DI) due to their injuries. If service members qualify for DI, after two years they become eligible for Medicare benefits. When retired service members become eligible for Medicare—based on age or disability—they are no longer eligible for traditional TRICARE. Instead, they become eligible for TRICARE for Life, which supplements Medicare. However, to retain access to TRICARE for Life, service members must enroll in Medicare Part B at a higher premium than TRICARE.

This requirement continues for eight and a half years, even if these wounded veterans reenter the workforce and no longer receive DI benefits. Meanwhile, other individuals can maintain their TRICARE access at standard TRICARE rates if they retired from the military for medical reasons but without DI eligibility.

The HEARTS act addresses this unintended inequity and will end the requirement that wounded veterans who return to work must pay for Medicare coverage to keep access to TRICARE. This will ensure they have access to the best possible health care as they re-enter the workforce after recovering from wounds sustained in the service of our nation.

There is still time in the current session for the Senate to pass this legislation so beneficiaries will not have to wait for the legislative process to start again next year. The National Military & Veterans Alliance thanks you for your attention regarding this issue and your support of our military, veterans, and retirees. We invite you to contact us regarding any issues affecting military and veterans in the future.

Sincerely,



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National Military and Veterans Alliance Member Organizations Supporting this Legislation

American Military Society
American Retirees Association
AMVETS
Armed Forces Marketing Council
Armed Forces Retirees Association
Army and Navy Union
Association of the United States Navy
Military Order of Foreign Wars
Military Order of the Purple Heart
Military Order of World Wars
Reserve Officers Association
Society of Military Widows
The Independence Fund
The Retired Enlisted Association
Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors