



National Military and Veterans Alliance

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December 8th, 2016

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Cornyn
United States Senate
517 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Dick Durbin
United States Senate
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John McCain
United States Senate
218 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
United States Senate
437 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators McConnell, Reid, Cornyn, Durbin, McCain, and Leahy

The National Military and Veterans Alliance (NMVA), a nonpartisan policy and advocacy organization composed of military associations and veterans organizations, writes to urge the Senate to pass H.R. 6416. The “Jeff Miller and Richard Blumenthal Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2016”, in part, assures eligibility to use Fry Scholarship education benefits to survivors who lost their loved one in the early days of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

Currently, public law cuts off Fry Scholarship eligibility 15 years from the date of a servicemember’s death for surviving spouses. Survivors who lost their spouses early only have a possible 12 or 24 months of eligibility to use the 36 months of educational benefits offered under the Fry Scholarship program.

For example, if a service member died in service in April 2002 his surviving spouse would have only from the enactment date of 1 Jan 2015 until 1 April 2017 to use the Fry Scholarship. That is less than 2 years of opportunity to use 36 months of Fry benefit for earliest Post 9-11 surviving spouses.

Under the provision any surviving spouse whose servicemember died in the line of duty after 9/11/2001 would have the time necessary to use the full 36-month benefit without fear of it being cut short midway through their educational pursuits. It is limited in scope to allow survivors whose service member spouse died between 9/11 and 2005 until 1 Jan 2021 to obtain their education.

Education is key for our nation’s surviving spouses who are now the breadwinners of the family. The intention of the expansion of the Fry Scholarship was that ALL military surviving spouses be afforded an education to achieve economic and social mobility to provide for themselves and their families.

Please press for passage of H.R. 6416 so that ALL of our Post 9-11 surviving spouses have the same advantage of a full 36 months of education and have the tools they and their families need to succeed. This provision is instrumental to help ensure that our families of the fallen thrive, not merely survive.

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NMVA thanks you for your continued support for the members of the military and veterans communities. As always, we look forward to working with you regarding any issue affecting our military personnel, veterans, retirees and their surviving spouses.

Sincerely,



Richard A. Jones
NMVA Co-Director
National Association for Uniformed Services



Ted S. Painter
NMVA Co-Director
American Military Retirees Association

Member Organizations, National Military and Veterans Alliance (NMVA)

American Military Retirees Association
American Military Society
Army Navy Union
American Retirees Association
Army Navy Union
Association of the United States Navy
Gold Star Wives
Military Order of Foreign Wars
Military Order of the Purple Heart
Military Order of the World Wars
National Association for Uniformed Services
Reserve Officers Association
Society of Military Widows
The Flag and General Officers Network
The Retired Enlisted Association
Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors
Vietnam Veterans of America