

March 15, 2021

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chair, Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Ranking Member, Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chair, Armed Services Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James Inhofe
Ranking Member, Armed Services Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Reed and Smith and Ranking Members Inhofe and Rogers:

The **National Military & Veterans Alliance (NMVA)**, a non-partisan umbrella group of more than 30 veteran- and military-servicing organizations and experts, writes to express our support for S. 344 / H.R. 1282, the *Major Richard Star Act*.

Under current law, Servicemembers who are medically retired due to combat-related injuries before reaching 20 years of service (also known as “Chapter 61 Veterans”) are prevented from collecting both their service earned retirement pay and VA disability compensation. These two benefits, established by Congress for entirely different reasons, are nonetheless subject to a statutory offset. In recognition of this injustice, medically retired personnel may apply for Combat Related Special Compensation that partially makes up for this injustice. The Major Richard Star Act will authorize concurrent receipt of DoD retired pay, for years of service, and VA disability compensation for injuries incurred in service. This legislation is another small step in correcting a larger concurrent receipt problem.

In 2004, Congress acknowledged the injustice of the offset by granting concurrent receipt for retirees with at least 20 years of service who are rated 50 percent disabled or greater. However, those who are 40 percent disabled and below, and those who were unable to complete 20 years of service due to service-connected injuries or illnesses are still subject to the offset. An incremental approach to correcting this injustice should start with those injured in combat in recognition of their extraordinary sacrifices in defending our Nation. Military retired pay is an earned benefit for vested years of service. Service-connected disability compensation is for injury. To deny retired pay because of a disability is an injustice.

As such, we request you ensure the Major Richard Star Act is incorporated into the FY22 National Defense Authorization Act to provide our veterans with the compensation they have rightfully earned. Major Star finally succumbed to his combat disabilities on February 13, 2021. We redouble our efforts to enact this legislation in tribute to his steadfast advocacy on this issue, and as a lasting legacy to his name.

Sincerely,



Kenneth Greenberg
Policy Director
VetsFirst, United Spinal Association
Co-Director, NMVA



Bob Carey, CAPT, USN, (Ret.)
Executive VP, Advocacy & Strategy
The Independence Fund
Acting Co-Director, NMVA

National Military & Veterans Alliance:

American Logistics Association
American Military Society
American Retirees Association
American Veterans (AMVETS)
American World War II Orphans Network
(AWON)
Armed Forces Retirees Association
Association of the United States Navy
(AUSN)
Catholic War Veterans, USA Inc.
Gold Star Wives of America (GSW)
Heroes Athletic Association
Japanese American Veterans Association

Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH)
Naval Enlisted Reserve Association (NERA)
Non Commissioned Officers Association
(NCOA)
Reserve Organization of America (ROA)
Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors
(TAPS)
TREA: The Enlisted Association
The Independence Fund (TIF)
Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
VetsFirst, United Spinal Association
Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA)