United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 5, 2019

The Honorable James Inhofe
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Inhofe, Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Reed, and Ranking Member Thornberry:

We write to ask you to include House-passed provisions which repeal the Survivor Benefit Plan – Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (SBP-DIC) offset, the so-called "widow's tax," in the final National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 (NDAA) conference agreement. The widow's tax prevents more than 67,000 surviving spouses of servicemen and women who die of service related causes from receiving the full SBP annuities they deserve.

As a result of the widow's tax, tens of thousands of surviving spouses are prevented from collecting the full insurance benefits from the Department of Defense for which their military retiree spouses paid because those benefits are offset by the DIC payments they receive from the Department of Veterans Affairs. On average, this offset means that surviving spouses are denied more than $11,000 per year in SBP benefits. In response to this unfairness, thousands of military widows have become grassroots advocates, working in many cases for more than 30 years to right this wrong for their own families and the entire military family community.

There has never before been more bipartisan support in Congress for repealing the SBP-DIC offset. Currently, there are 75 co-sponsors of legislation to repeal the widow's tax in the Senate and 371 co-sponsors in the House. Numerous military and veterans advocacy groups have joined us in this effort.

We have an obligation to make sure that we are taking care of our military families who have sacrificed so much. This problem goes back decades, but this year we can finally solve it once and for all. It is our time to do our duty not only to support the brave men and women of our military, but also to support their families.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Doug Jones
United States Senator

Susan M. Collins
United States Senator

Jon Tester
United States Senator

Mike Crapo
United States Senator

Patrick Leahy
United States Senator

James E. Risch
United States Senator

Patty Murray
United States Senator

John Cornyn
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Roy Blunt
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Jerry Moran
United States Senator

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

John Boozman
United States Senator

Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

John Hoeven
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Marco Rubio
United States Senator

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

Ted Cruz
United States Senator

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senator

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

Bill Cassidy, M.D.
Bill Cassidy
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Cory Gardner
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Tom Cotton
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey Jr.
United States Senator

Steve Daines
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

John Kennedy
United States Senator

Tom Udall
United States Senator

Marsha Blackburn
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Martha McSally
United States Senator

Mark R. Warner
United States Senator

Lindsey O. Graham
United States Senator

Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator

Richard Burr
United States Senator

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

Rick Scott
United States Senator

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

Kevin Cramer
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator

Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator

Tina Smith
United States Senator

Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator

Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

Joe Manchin III
United States Senator

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Lamar Alexander
United States Senator

Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator