

SERVICE OFFICER REPORT

11 MAY 2019

SURVIVOR BENEFIT PLAN:

Background: More than 65,000 surviving military spouses and dependents are unjustly penalized because their loved ones made the ultimate sacrifice for our country.

Similar to life insurance, the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) is purchased through DOD by military retirees to ensure their surviving loved ones can maintain a modest standard of living. When service members or veterans die from injuries or illnesses related to their military service, survivors are eligible for VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC). Despite the two payments being paid for two different reasons from two different federal departments, all monthly SBP retirement payments are reduced by \$1319 ---- the current payout for DIC benefits. For many survivors, this offset eliminates their SBP payments and threatens their financial security. The recent tax law makes this situation worse by doubling the tax on dependents to whom parents transferred SBP benefits to avoid having to forfeit DIC benefits.

You can act by contacting your members of Congress and urge them to end the injustice now. The message these aptly termed "Widow's Tax" and "Kiddie Tax" sends to service members, veterans, and their families is that our government salutes their service while in uniform, but they cost too much if they die on active duty or from service-connected conditions.

You can get more information on this and how to contact your members of Congress by going to vfwactioncorps.com

TRAGIC TRENDS: SUICIDE PREVENTION AMONG VETERANS

The House Committee on Veterans Affairs held a hearing to discuss how to prevent suicides among veterans. The VFW submitted a statement highlighting the efforts of VFW Posts around the world who have participated in "A Day to Change Direction", (<https://www.changedirection.org/dat-to-change-direction/>), which trains veterans and their families to identify the five signs of emotional suffering, (<https://www.virvesity.com/tools/oc/courses/kr>) . the VFW also urged Congress and VA to train VA staff to identify and assist veterans in crisis, ensure sufficient resources are available and used for effective VA suicide prevention efforts, exempt those who have worn our nation's uniform and receive urgent and emergent mental health care under VA's humanitarian care authority from having to pay for full cost of such care, and conduct research on veterans who die by suicide without contact with the VA Health care system.