**Sample Letter to Lawmaker on GSW Priorities**

Dear Representative/Senator \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

My name is [insert name], and I am the surviving [insert relationship] of [insert loved one’s name]. I am writing as your constituent about the support this country provides for the survivors of our active-duty service members and Veterans. As a member of Gold Star Wives of America, I believe it is extremely important that this country ensure we honor and respect the sacrifice military survivors have made for our country.

When federal employees die because of their job, their surviving spouses are entitled to up to 55% of their spouse's compensation. Unfortunately, survivors of military service members who die while serving on active duty, veterans who die from a service-connected disability, or veterans who are rated 100% disabled by the Department of Veterans’ Affairs (VA) for 10 years or more receive less compensation than their federal employee counterparts. At present, the monthly base rate of DIC is $1.562.74. The monthly compensation for veterans with 100% service-connected disabilities is $3,621.95 per month. These numbers show that DIC accounts for 43% of a disabled veteran's income, which is significantly lower than survivors of federal employees. Surviving families of military personnel deserve the same benefits as other federal employees.

Additionally, survivors of military personnel are penalized for being under the age of 55 years old. Under current law, surviving spouses that remarry under 55 will lose all Department of Defense (DoD) and VA surviving spouse benefits, including Survivor Benefit Plan, VA DIC, access to military installations, etc. As a result of lost benefits, many surviving spouses are unable to move forward in life in a full manner after the death of their spouse. This has the potential to be over a 30-year long penalty. When a surviving spouse of a military member remarries after 55, they keep their benefits. Survivors of firefighters and law enforcement personnel are eligible to retain their benefits upon remarriage. Even divorced spouses can continue to receive certain military benefits if they remarry after divorcing their military spouse. Should a military survivor marry again while under the age of 55, they should also continue to receive their benefits.

Our freedom comes at the price our lost loved one paid, sacrificing everything for our country. Despite this, inequality persists. We ask that you support legislation that will increase VA DIC to 55% of a Veteran’s VA compensation and support eliminating the penalties for survivors who remarry. For more detailed information please see the attached fact sheets.

Respectfully,

**Sample Phone Call to Get Veteran Legislative Assistant Contact Info**

{Caller}

Hello, my name is [insert name] and I am a constituent of [insert lawmaker’s name] and the surviving [insert relationship] of [insert loved one’s name] and a member of Gold Star Wives of America. I am calling to connect with your veteran legislative assistant to talk about the issues facing military surviving spouses.

{Front Desk Staffer}

Great, their name is ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

And they can be reached at [phone number]\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or [email]­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

{Caller}

Wonderful, thank you! I will be in touch!

**Sample Phone Call to Connect with Veteran Legislative Assistant**

{Caller}

Hello, my name is [insert name] and I am a constituent of [insert lawmaker’s name] and the surviving [insert relationship] of [insert loved one’s name] and a member of Gold Star Wives of America.

I would like to talk to you about the legislative priorities of Gold Star Wives of America and why they are important to our country. When would a good time to talk be?

**Sample email to Veteran Legislative Assistant**

Good day [insert veteran legislative assistant’s name],

My name is [insert name] and I am a constituent of [insert lawmaker’s name], the surviving [insert relationship] of [insert loved one’s name], and a member of Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.

I am writing to schedule a time to talk about the issues facing military surviving spouses. I have attached two fact sheets on our main issues of increasing the Department of Veterans’ Affairs survivor benefit and eliminating remarriage penalties.

Please let me know when a good time to connect would be. I am available to talk over the phone or to meet virtually. I look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,