

**Talking Points/Issues**

1. **Doing Business as Gold Star Spouses**

At the Gold Star Wives of America, Inc. National Convention in 2022, a resolution was passed to start to do business as Gold Star Spouses of America. This resolution was passed in recognition of the fact that not all of those who serve are male and not all who are spouses are women. We want to ensure congressional offices understand that this change has been made.

1. **DIC**

**What is DIC?**

 DIC is short for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation. This is monthly tax-free monetary benefit can be paid by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to a surviving spouse, surviving child, or surviving parent of a military member who dies while serving on active duty or a veteran who dies from a service-connected illness or injury.

**What is the problem?**

 Currently, the base rate of DIC is $1.562.74 per month. The rate of compensation for a 100% service-connected veteran is $3,621.95 per month. This means that DIC is 43% of a veteran’s compensation.

 Currently surviving spouses of federal employees have the ability to receive 55% of their spouses compensation should they die due to their work.

 Military surviving families deserve benefit equal to federal employees.

**How can we fix this?**

*Caring for Survivor Act of 2021*

This bill had two components:

1. Increase in amount of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation for Surviving Spouses to 55% of a 100% service-connected veteran compensation.
2. Modify the requirements for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation for Survivors of certain veterans rated totally disabled at time of death. It would lower the threshold of DIC eligibility to 5 years for surviving spouses of 100% service-connected veterans, however in the 5 to 10 year range DIC would be relative to years of 100% rating.

In the 117th Congress this bill was introduced in the House and Senate.

House of Representatives –

[**H.R. 3402**](https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/3402/text)**,** Caring for Survivor Act of 2021, which was introduced by Rep. Jahana Hayes (D-CT-5). This bill ended that congress with 73 cosponsors.

Senate –

[**S. 976**](https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/976)**,** Caring for Survivor Act of 2021, was introduced by Sen. Jon Tester (D-MT). This bill ended with 14 cosponsors.

 **3. Remarriage**

 **What is the problem?**

Currently, when a surviving spouse remarries, under the age of 55 years old, they lose all of their surviving spouse benefits from both DoD and VA, including Survivor Benefit Plan, VA DIC, access to military installations and more. The potential loss of benefits many times stops surviving spouses from fully moving forward with their lives.

Military surviving spouses can keep their benefits if they remarry after the age of 55. Also, surviving spouses of law enforcement and firefighters can keep their benefits if they remarry. Younger military surviving spouses should be able to retain their benefits if they remarry.

There are a number of specific asks that fall under this issue:

1. Removing the loss of the Fry Scholarship should a surviving spouse get remarried or for reaching 15 years from the date of death.
2. To keep entitlement to VA DIC should a surviving spouse remarry AND reinstate DIC for any surviving spouse who has already remarried.
3. To keel entitlement to DOD Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) and reinstate SBP for anyone who transferred to SBP’s Child Option or remarried.
4. To keep entitlement to Exchange and MWR facilities.
5. Expand definition of Dependent under TRICARE to include remarried surviving spouses so they can keep TRICARE after remarriage.
6. Change the definition of surviving spouse for VA purposes. Remove “opposite sex” and “holding oneself out to be married.”

 **How can we fix this?**

*Love Lives On Act of 2022* incorporated all of the above asks.

 In the 117th Congress this bill was introduced in the House and the Senate.

 Senate-

[S. 4841](https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/4841?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22s.+4841%22%2C%22s.%22%2C%224841%22%5D%7D&s=2&r=2)- Love Lives On Act of 2022 was introduced by Sen. Raphael Warnock (D-GA) and Sen. Jerry Moran (R-KS) on September 13, 2022. The bill ended with these two cosponsors.

[H.R. 9287](https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/9287) – Love Lives On Act of 2022 was introduced by Rep. Dean Phillips (D-MN3) and Rep. Richard Hudson (R-NC8) on November 10, 2023. The bill ended with 3 cosponsors.

*Captain James C. Edge Gold Star Spouse Equity Act* would allow remarried surviving spouses to retain their SBP and DIC and for both benefits to be reinstated for any qualifying surviving spouse. Only for active-duty death surviving spouses.

In the 117th Congress this bill was introduced in the House.

[H.R. 2827](https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/2827) – This act was introduced by Rep. Michael Waltz (R-FL6), Rep. Seth Moulton (D-MA6), and Rep. Jason Crow (D-CO6) on April 22, 2021. The bill ended with 25 cosponsors.