**TN COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS**

**SURVIVING SPOUSE REPORT**

**April 16, 2025**

**All Tennessee MOAA Chapters have provided their Surviving Spouse Liaison (SSL) information, except the East Tennessee Chapter. A Surviving Spouse Liaison may be a surviving spouse, spouse, or an officer in your chapter.Please update Patricia of any Surviving Spouse Liaison changes.If a Chapter Surviving Spouse Liaison needs assistance helping a surviving spouse, please contact Patricia at** [**p\_bergq@hotmail.com**](mailto:p_bergq@hotmail.com) **or (615-948-4960).**

**ADVOCACY/LEGISLATION**

1. **H.R.2055 and S.611- “Caring for Survivors Act of 2025” sponsored by Rep. Johana Haynes (D-CT), Rep. Brian K. Fitzpatrick (PA-R) Sen. Richard Blumenthal (CT-D), and Sen. John Boozman (AR-R) are to expand Title 38, United States Code, to improve and expand eligibility for the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) paid by the VA to surviving spouses and others whose veteran died on active duty or from a service-related injury/illness. This legislation would increase DIC from 43% of a single, 100% disabled veteran’s compensation to 55%. The 2025 DIC flat rate is $1,653.07 per month. Passage of these bills would mean an increase of $454 per month per recipient and increase the DIC flat rate to $2,107.07 per month. Since 1993, DIC has only been increased by Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA). This increase is needed by not only our aging surviving spouses, but our young surviving spouses raising children alone due to active-duty death, service-connected death, and suicide! Also, the bills would lower the 10-year requirement for a 100% veterans’ rating to 5-years to award DIC for a non-service-connected death. Proportionate payments for 5-10 years of 100% rating. There are 506,492 DIC eligible surviving spouses as of December 31, 2024.**

***H.R.2055 has 53 co-sponsors (1 TN: S. Cohen (TN-09)***

***S.611 as 1 co-sponsors (NONE* *from TN)***

1. **H.R.1004 and S.410 - “Love Lives on Act 2025”, endorsed by over 50 Veteran Service Organizations, was introduced by Rep. Sen. Jerry Moran (KS-R) and Sen. Raphael Warnock (GA-D) with 22 original co-sponsors and Representatives Richard Hudson (NC-R), Joe Neguse (CO-D), Derrick Van Orden (WI-R), Kelly Morrison (MN-D), Morgan Luttrell (TX-R), and Ro Khanna (CA-D). Approximately 30,000 surviving spouse who receive benefits would be impacted positively by passage of this legislation.**

**Currently, surviving military spouses are not allowed to remarry before the arbitrary age of 55** **without losing ALL their benefits.**

**Specifically, we understand the bill allows the following:**

* **Allows retention of Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) through the Department of Defense at any age,**
* **Allows retention of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) upon remarriage at any age;**
* **Allows remarried surviving spouses to regain their TRICARE benefits if their marriage subsequently ends due to annulment, divorce, or death.**

**H.R.1004 has 45 *co-sponsors* (NONE from TN)**

**S.410 has 33 *co-sponsors* (NONE from TN)**

**In the last Congress through the Sen. Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefit Improvement Act, three (3) of the provisions in the original bill passed into law:**

* **Allows remarried surviving spouses access to Commissary and Exchange benefits;**
* **Allows remarried surviving spouses to maintain eligibility for education benefits under Fry Scholarships (Chapter 33) upon remarriage; and**
* **Removes the “hold themselves out to be married” clause from 38 USC, Section 101, Paragraph 3, which could cause loss of survivor benefits.**

***Note: Remarried surviving spouses who desire Commissary/Exchange access effective October 1, 2025 (per the bill) will be required to have proper ID. We are waiting for the Department of Defense to release the process for obtaining identification.***

**Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) under leadership of Ashlynne Haycock-Lohman, TAPS Legislative Director, continues to lead the charge to advocate on Capitol Hill, and keeps the Love Lives On Act of 2025 FaceBook group focused on the e-mail campaign to U.S. Congressmen and Senators to garner co-sponsorship and support for the bill.**

**ADVOCACY:**

**While MOAA National only has these two pieces of legislation in its second or third priority tier, e-mail campaigns continue to both Congressmen and Senators across the United States to garner co-sponsors and support. Please encourage all MOAA chapter members and surviving spouses to contact their Congressmen and Senators to advocate for legislation impacting our surviving spouses as follows:**

**MOAA’s Legislative Action Center at https://**[**www.moaa.org/takeaction**](http://www.moaa.org/takeaction) **or** [**https://moaa.quorum.us**](https://moaa.quorum.us) **to send a MOAA prewritten message which you can personalize (recommended) to your Congressman and Senators.**

**Contact your Congressman and Senators, using the MOAA Capitol Switchboard (1-866-272-6622), ask to be connected to your Congressman or Senator’s office, once connected ask to speak with the Military Legislative Assistant (MLA). Follow up your phone call with an e-mail to the MLA.**

***Please use the attached, updated (3/20/25) TN Congressmen and Senators Contact List for the MLA name and e-mail***

**You may also e-mail your Congressman or Senators directly via their website.**

**Please *do not* use USPS to contact congressional leaders. USPS mail is screened off site before delivery and prolongs delivery time!**

**The *most active* surviving spouses FaceBook groups following these bills are:**

* **“DIC Surviving Spouses/DIC Increase Advocacy”**
* **“Love Lives on Act of 2025 Advocacy”**