



National Military and Veterans Alliance

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February 9th, 2016

The Honorable Scott Rigell
United States House of Representatives
418 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC. 20515

The Honorable Tammy Duckworth
United States House of Representatives
104 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC. 20515

Dear Representatives Rigell and Duckworth,

The National Military and Veterans Alliance, a non-partisan policy and advocacy organization composed of military and veteran service organizations, thanks you for introducing the “Military Spouses Achieving College Education for Survivors Act of 2015, the ACES Act of 2015 (H.R. 2531).” Your bill will amend The Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 to clarify the period of eligibility during which certain spouses are entitled to assistance under the Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship.

Eligible surviving spouses are very hopeful that your legislation is passed expeditiously. Your legislation expands the length of time that a surviving spouse of a service member killed between September 11, 2001 and December 31, 2005 has to use this important educational benefit. As you know, the Fry Scholarship, as it is commonly referred to, allows dependent children and surviving spouses to attend colleges or universities for up to 36 months and pays 100 percent of tuition and fees at public institutions and up to \$20,235 per year at private institutions.

Under current law, a surviving spouse has fifteen years from the date of the death of his or her service member to use the Fry scholarship benefit. However, unlike spouses who became eligible for the benefit after the current law was passed, many spouses whose service members were killed in the line of duty prior to the passage of the law have not had fifteen years to use their benefit. Your proposed change in the law rectifies this situation by starting the fifteen year clock on January 1, 2006 and would allow approximately 1,840 of our earliest post 9/11 surviving spouses to attain their education by ensuring that all survivors will have the entire fifteen years to use the benefit.

We recognize that the intent of the original law was to honor the service and sacrifice of our Post-9/11 warriors by ensuring that their survivors were afforded the means to provide for themselves and their families. However, current law limits the participation of the earliest eligible survivors whose spouses were among the first patriots to answer America’s call and paid the ultimate sacrifice.

We salute your efforts and leadership in addressing this important issue and we would like you to know that you have our continued thanks. Please feel free to contact us regarding this and any issue affecting military veterans, retirees, their families and their survivors.

Sincerely,

National Military and Veterans Alliance

Page 2

Member Organizations, National Military and Veterans Alliance (NMVA)

American Logistics Association

American Military Retirees Association

American Military Society

American Retirees Association

Army Navy Union

Association of the United States Navy

Korean War Veterans of America

Military Order of Foreign Wars

Military Order of the Purple Heart

National Association for Uniformed Services

National Defense Committee

Reserve Officers Association

The Flag and General Officers Network

The Retired Enlisted Association

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors

Vietnam Veterans of America