In This Week’s Legislative Watch:

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Military Retiree Survivor Comfort Act: Contact Your Elected Lawmakers Now!

Congressman Walter Jones, (R-NC-3) recently introduced the Military Retiree Survivor Comfort Act, a bill that would allow a surviving spouse to receive and keep the final retirement check received during the month in which a retiree becomes deceased.

In accordance with current law, the Defense Finance Accounting Service (DFAS) is required to electronically withdraw the last payment from a deceased retiree's checking account and then, several weeks later, send a check for the portion of the month that the retiree was living to the retiree’s surviving spouse. This can cause a great deal of hardship because, in most cases, a survivor cannot plan for his or her spouse’s death and retirement checks are usually utilized to pay recurring bills. When DFAS electronically withdraws the entirety of the last payment from the deceased retiree’s checking account, checks written for these bills can bounce or payments cannot be made.

Because retirement is paid in arrears (the month after it was earned), amending current law would allow for a much less burdensome transition from that of a military spouse to that of a surviving spouse by allowing the spouse to receive and keep the entirety of the last retirement check received during the month in which the retiree becomes deceased. However, in the interest of the tax payer who would fund these additional monies, Survivor Benefit Plan payments should not start until the first day of the first month following the month in which the retiree becomes deceased. This coordination between retirement pay and SBP payments will prevent a surviving spouse from receiving two payments during the same month while providing the spouse with a smooth financial transition to that of a surviving spouse.

AMRA supports this legislation and we urge you to contact your elected lawmakers and let them know that you want them to use their influence to help advance this bill. You can easily and quickly do so by going to: http://cqrcengage.com/amra/app/write-a-letter?10&engagementId=375193. Once here, you can send or edit the existing letter which will automatically be sent to your House Representatives and Senators.

SSIA Extension Amendment Included in Senate NDAA
Earlier this week the Senate included Senator Nelson’s bill, S. 1411, in the Senate version of the National Defense Authorization Act. The bill will provide for a five-year extension of the payment of the special survivor indemnity allowance under the Survivor Benefit Plan.

This legislation was not included in the House version of the NDAA and the two bills must now be reconciled in the upcoming conference committee. During this conference, House Members must agree to include the provision in order for the law to go into effect once President Trump signs the final, reconciled, version of the NDAA.

Current Legislation that Requires Your Action

SBP-DIC offset: We are pleased to announce that Congressman Joe Wilson and Senator Nelson have introduced House Resolution 846 and Senate bill 339. These bills would repeal current law which allows the federal government to garnish a surviving spouse’s wages by deducting her Survivor Benefit Plan payment in order to fund her Disability Indemnification Compensation benefit—both of which are earned (and in the case of SBP, paid for by her spouse prior to death).

Congressman Wilson and Senator Nelson have done their part. It is now up to us to advance this legislation by urging your House Representative to support the bill. AMRA has made this very easy to do. Simply click on the links below and in less than a minute you can send a letter to your elected House and Senate lawmakers.

Your action, whether you’re affected by the offset or not, is greatly needed in order to finally end this unfair wage garnishment. Please act today!

Send a Letter to Congress Today:

H.R. 846: http://cqrcengage.com/amra/HR846theMilitarySurvivingSpousesEquityAct

S. 339: http://cqrcengage.com/amra/S979TheMilitarySurvivingSpousesEquityAct

Concurrent Receipt Offset: Senator Heller has introduced S. 66, a bill to end the offset of retirement pay and VA disability pay. It is very important for your House and Senate lawmakers to co-sponsor this bill and its companion House bills, H.R. 303 and H.R. 333. H.R. 303 and S. 66 aim to eliminate the current offset for all regular retirees with less than 50% disability ratings. H.R. 333 would end the offset for this group as well as medically retired (chapter 61) retirees with less than twenty years of service.

Send a Letter to Congress Today:

S. 66: http://cqrcengage.com/amra/S271 ConcurrentReceipt

H.R. 303: http://cqrcengage.com/amra/HR303 ConcurrentReceipt


AMRA Member Engagement Guarantees Success

The last session of Congress saw several legislative victories for AMRA. The current session will see us tackling two very large issues: Concurrent Receipt and the SBP-DIC offset. Your engagement in these issues with your elected officials in the house and senate will be integral to any success that AMRA may have in these areas. You are urged to utilize the CAPWIZ tool on our website and to stay in regular contact with your lawmakers—the squeaky wheel gets the grease! Thank you. AMRA looks forward to a successful 115th session of Congress.