



February 28, 2020

The Honorable Gus Bilirakis
United States House of Representatives
2227 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Bilirakis:

On behalf of service members, veterans, their families and survivors, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW), Wounded Warrior Project (WWP), the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), National Military Family Association (NMFA), Fleet Reserve Association (FRA), and TREA: The Enlisted Association write to express our support of H.R. 5995, *Major Richard Star Act*.

Military retirees with 20 or more years of service qualify for retirement pay based on their dedicated service to our nation. These retirees may also qualify for disability compensation for any injuries that were caused or aggravated by their military service. Prior to 2004, military retirees could not receive both retirement pay and disability pay because it was erroneously perceived as a duplication of benefits or “double dipping.” In 2004, The Military Coalition (TMC) successfully advocated Congress to implement concurrent receipt for retirees who are rated 50 percent disabled or greater.

Remaining to be approved are those who are 40% disabled and below, and those who were unable to complete 20 years of service due to service-connected injuries or illness. There are approximately 210,000 of these individuals, known as Chapter 61 retirees. Some retirees who suffered from injuries incurred in combat are eligible for Combat Related Special Compensation (CRSC) which mitigates to varying degrees some loss in pay due to the offset. There are approximately 42,000 of these individuals.

Military and Veterans Service Organizations have long argued that retired pay and VA service-connected disability compensation are fundamentally different benefits, granted for different reasons. Military retired pay is an earned benefit for vested years of service. Service-connected disability compensation is for injury. To deny retired pay because of a disability is an injustice.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that eliminating full concurrent receipt would cost more than \$30 billion over ten years. An incremental approach chips away at the total cost by first eliminating subsets of the population who are still awaiting concurrent receipt of both pays.

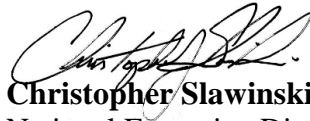
The veterans in most need are those with combat injuries and less than 20 years of service. The *Major Richard Star Act* would provide total offset relief. This also reduces the number of people still awaiting total concurrent receipt, and commensurately reduces the cost of total concurrent receipt for all retirees who should keep both their retired pay and disability compensation.

We appreciate your leadership on this issue and your commitment to America's military and veterans. Thank you for introducing this legislation and we look forward to working with you to move this bill forward.

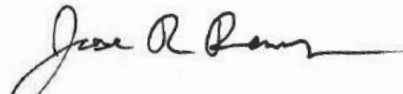
Sincerely,



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