

## LARSON: GOP PLAN FOR DISABLED VETERANS TAX STILL LEAVES MOST VETERANS HANGING Republican Plan Would Leave Behind a Majority of Disabled Veterans

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Republican Plan Would Leave Behind a Majority of Disabled Veterans

WASHINGTON, D.C.- U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) today released the following statement on Republican plans to bring legislation to the floor that purports to address the Disabled Veterans Tax, formerly known as "concurrent receipt." The proposal would be phased in over 10 years and only cover those veterans who are more than 50 percent service disabled, leaving more than half of disabled veterans behind.

Larson stated: "After years of dragging their feet on this issue, the Republican Majority seems to have bowed to intense pressure from Democrats and are now trying to appear as if they are acting on behalf of disabled veterans. Unfortunately, only a small fraction of the more than half a million disabled veterans will see any benefit under their proposal and even then relief for those veterans will not come for 10 years. This is no great compromise - it is little more than a public relations cover.

"The only acceptable solution to the Disabled Veterans tax is bringing H.R. 303, the Retired Pay Restoration Act, to the floor, which has the bipartisan support of 372 members of the House. This legislation would immediately authorize concurrent receipt of the full payment of both retirement pay and disability compensation for all eligible veterans. In order to bring this bill to the floor, Democrats have introduced a discharge petition designed to bring the bill to the floor. Despite strong support for the bill, only two Republicans have signed the petition while nearly every Democrat has signed on.

"America's veterans have done a great service and have made incredible sacrifices for this nation and ending the disabled veterans tax once and for all is the least Congress and can in return. It is unfortunate that the Republicans are attempting to make a half-hearted political gimmick out of this issue, instead of truly solving the problem by giving all disabled veterans the benefits they deserve," said Larson.

Under current law, veterans with 20 years of military service are entitled to receive retirement benefits from the Department of Defense. In addition, veterans who incurred service-related disabilities are entitled to receive disability compensation benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs. However, if a veteran has both 20 years of military service and a service-related disability, the veteran's military retirement benefit is reduced on a dollar-for dollar basis by the amount he or she receives in disability compensation.

Among those who would be left out of the reported Republican proposal to compensate only some disabled veterans are:

Ø A Vietnam veteran disabled due to a below the knee amputation.

Ø A Gulf War veteran with debilitating fatigue, cognitive impairments or other symptoms that are nearly constant and restrict daily routine to 50 to 75 percent of pre-illness level.

Ø A Korean War veteran with pain, numbness and cold sensitivity with tissue loss in both feet due to a cold injury.

Under the Republican proposal, a 100 percent disabled military retiree in 2004 will lose \$18,000 rather than \$27,000, the amount by which their military retirement pay will be reduced to pay for their disability compensation benefits. A retiree who is 50% disabled will lose about \$6,500 in benefits rather than \$7,700. Even those disabled veterans who qualify under the plan will not see significant relief for years.

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Congressman Larson is a Member of the House Armed Services Committee