

LARSON FIGHTS TO GUARANTEE FULL SURVIVOR BENEFITS TO MILITARY SPOUSES

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WASHINGTON, D.C.- U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-1) today signed onto a discharge petition to bring legislation to the floor of the House that would allow hundreds of thousands of military spouses to keep their full survivor benefits. A discharge petition is a legislative procedure to force the House Leadership to bring a bill to the floor for a vote. It requires the signatures of 218 House members - a majority - to pass.

Under current law, when the spouse of a military retiree reaches age 62, the survivor benefits guaranteed to them because of their spouse's military service automatically drop from 55% of the deceased spouses military retired pay to 35% - or by more than a third. Over the next 10 years, 200,000 military spouses are expected to lose benefits under this survivor benefit penalty, and it will eventually affect the 1.2 million military retirees enrolled in the Survivor Benefit Plan.

"More than one million military retirees pay premiums for years in anticipation that when they die, their spouse will receive 55 percent of their retirements benefits," said Larson. "Yet when their spouses - who are mostly widows - reach age 62, the benefits they receive will drop by a third. There is currently legislation with 321 co-sponsors to address this problem and allow the families of military retirees to receive the benefits they are entitled to. Unfortunately, the House Republican Leadership has refused to bring this bill to the floor for a vote, despite its broad bipartisan support. This discharge petition will force Republican Leadership to allow a vote on this measure. Our veterans and their families should not have to fight to receive the benefits they have sacrificed a great deal to earn."

The petition to bring the Military Survivor Benefits Improvement Act, H.R. 548, to the floor was introduced yesterday and immediately garnered 75 signatures. Despite the fact that 130 Republicans are co-sponsors of the legislation, none have signed the petition.

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