



PRESS RELEASE

TAPS Gives Military and Veteran Survivors a Voice on Capitol Hill During Advocacy Week

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WASHINGTON — Nearly 150 military and veteran surviving family members, from ages 2 to 76 and representing districts across the United States, will gather in the nation’s capital during the 2nd Annual Gold Star Families Advocacy Week, the last week of September to support key legislation alongside the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS). Two bipartisan-supported bills, the Love Lives On Act and the Caring for Survivors Act, are legislative priorities for TAPS that would protect survivors’ financial benefits and improve access to critical resources.

The Love Lives on Act would allow widowed survivors to retain the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) — both critical financial benefits — upon remarriage at any age. Under current legislation, surviving spouses surrender these benefits if they remarry prior to the age of 55. “Young surviving spouses must choose between opening their hearts to marriage and retaining certain benefits,” shared TAPS President and Founder Bonnie Carroll. “These men and women endured an indescribable loss. They will always carry the title of military widow and widower; remarriage will not change that.”

The bill, which has been introduced in both chambers, would also maintain a survivor’s eligibility for certain education benefits and commissary and exchange privileges. Remarried surviving spouses would also be able to regain their own TRICARE health care benefits if that marriage subsequently ends. Senator Jerry Moran (R-KS), Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs Ranking Member and bill sponsor said, “As Gold Star spouses heal from their loss and choose to remarry, they should not have to worry about losing their survivors’ benefits provided by the VA and DoD.”

In addition to the Love Lives On Act, TAPS’ team of advocates will meet with lawmakers to discuss DIC — the monthly rate of compensation paid to survivors whose loved ones died in the line of duty or from a service-related injury or illness. The Caring for Survivors Act would adjust this monthly payment to bring it more in line with other federal program payments — DIC currently lags behind these comparable payments by 12 percent. “I will always defend the earned benefits and economic security of our military families who lost their loved ones in the line of service. These families have endured the unimaginable and giving them more economic certainty is something everyone should support,” said Jon Tester (D-MT), Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs Chairman.

TAPS’ Gold Star Families Advocacy Week has captured the interest of surviving family members and members of Congress alike, who have prioritized attendance for two days of meetings on Capitol Hill, from Sept. 23-26, and a congressional reception. TAPS staff, fellow advocates, and survivors will form 22 teams and canvas the halls, seeking support for the bills that will not only shape their lives after loss, but the lives of generations of survivors who will follow them.

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In addition to this critical legislation, TAPS is also prioritizing two other bills: the Health Care Fairness for Military Families Act, which would fix inequity in military health care coverage for families with young adults, and the CHAMPVA Children's Care Protection Act, which would extend VA health care coverage for children and survivors of disabled veterans to the age of 26 — the same coverage required under private-sector insurance plans.

TAPS, which was also instrumental in the advocacy and passage of the PACT Act and ending the Widow's Tax, among other legislative advancements during its 30-year existence, is grateful for the time lawmakers are dedicating to the important conversation on survivor benefits. TAPS will continue to be the voice for U.S. military and veteran survivors, and encourages all survivors and supporters to contact their legislators to advocate for the passage of the Love Lives On Act, the Caring for Survivors Act, and both young adult health care bills.

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ABOUT TAPS

TAPS is the national nonprofit organization providing compassionate care and comprehensive resources to all those grieving a death in the military and veteran community. TAPS was founded by military-loss survivor Bonnie Carroll, in 1994. TAPS – which, in the last 30 years, has become synonymous with 24/7, lifelong support for all grieving a military or veteran death — provides resources during each step of a survivor's walk through grief with a combination of peer-based support, the 24/7 National Military Survivor Helpline, in-person events, community-based care, casework assistance, and grief and trauma resources. The TAPS mission has touched more than 100,000 survivors, casualty assistance officers, chaplains, and bereavement supporters since its founding. For more information, please visit [TAPS.org](https://taps.org) or call 202-588-TAPS (8277).

