

TIMOTHY M. BORLAND

Commander-in-Chief



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
OF THE UNITED STATES

January 17, 2023

Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

On behalf of the members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) and its Auxiliary, I write to request your urgent support in ensuring our nation's veterans receive the benefits they have earned by defending the ideals our nation holds sacred. Concurrent receipt policies impose what is known as an offset, whereby hundreds of thousands of veterans are required to forfeit all or part of one benefit to pay for or pay back another. Erroneously justified by Congress to prevent "double-dipping," this policy is nothing more than a way to save money on the backs of veterans.

The widespread harm caused by offsetting military retirement pay, for example, and the dollar-for-dollar loss of such pay creates an economic burden on military families worldwide. Under current policy, military retirement pay from the Department of Defense (DOD) is reduced by one dollar for every dollar of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability compensation a veteran receives. Military retirement pay is earned for years of vested service, while VA disability compensation is awarded as supplementary income for reduced earning potential of disabled veterans who incur lifelong illnesses and injuries from their service. These are two fundamentally different benefits earned for two entirely different reasons. In 2004, Congress acknowledged this clear injustice by authorizing full concurrent receipt of DOD retirement pay and VA disability compensation *only* for those who served at least twenty years and have at least a fifty percent service-connected rating. At the time, Congress committed to gradually phasing in full concurrent receipt over the next few years, but nearly two decades later, this still has not happened. This inaction has *left countless veterans behind*, creating glaring disparities, resentment, and uncertainty around how much our nation values veterans' service.

In 2020, the 116th Congress moved the needle by repealing the "Widow's Tax," marking a significant win for survivors and families. Most recently, the *Major Richard Star Act* (H. R. 1282/S. 344) garnered overwhelming bipartisan and bicameral support from members of the 117th Congress, yet not enough to make it to your desk. With such little progress in nearly twenty years to sunset remaining offset policies, it has become clear that political will is lacking, warranting the White House's leadership.

The VFW—and by extension the entire veteran community—is looking to you, President Biden, to lead from the front on this issue, as you did with toxic exposure legislation. We implore you to make repealing concurrent receipt policies one of your legislative policy priorities in the fiscal year 2024 DOD budget request. No veteran should question the value of their service to our country due to an unethical budget gimmick. By repealing concurrent receipt, you will let them know that **Every Veteran Counts**.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy M. Borland".

TIMOTHY M. BORLAND
Commander-in-Chief

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