

Concurrent Receipt

The VFW's Concerns:

Military retirees with 20 or more years of service qualify for retirement pay based on their dedicated service to our nation. These same veterans 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 retirement pay and disability compensation because it was erroneously perceived as a duplication of benefits. In 2004, the VFW pushed Congress to implement a phase-in of full concurrent receipt for retirees who are rated 50 percent disabled or greater.

The VFW has long argued that retired pay and VA service-connected disability compensation are fundamentally different benefits, granted for different reasons. Military retired pay is earned by 20 or more years of service in the United States Armed Forces, allowing retirees to maintain their standard of living while attempting to enter the civilian job market for the first time in the middle of their prime working years. Service-connected disability compensation is a benefit meant to supplement a veteran's lost earning potential as a result of the disabilities he or she incurred while in service.

The VFW acknowledges that eliminating full concurrent receipt all at once is a significant task. However, Congress should chip away at the unjust offset by first eliminating the offset for medical disability retirement. Service members found to be unfit for continued service due to physical disability may be retired if the condition is permanent and stable, and the disability is rated by the Department of Defense (DOD) as 30 percent or greater. These veterans are referred to as Chapter 61 retirees—almost 20% of whom are discharged due to combat-related injuries and have had the benefits they deserve unjustly denied for years.

The VFW's Solution:

- Congress must pass H.R. 5995, *Major Richard Star Act*, and S. 3393, which would enable Chapter 61 veterans discharged due to combat-related injuries to be entitled to DOD longevity payment and VA disability compensation without offset.