The Hospitalized Veterans Financial Assistance Act of 2002

HON. SUSAN DAVIS
OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, March 20, 2002

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, today I have the pleasure to introduce the Hospitalized Veterans Financial Assistance Act of 2002 and thank my Veterans Affairs Committee colleagues, Committee Ranking Member LANE EVANS, Benefits Subcommittee Ranking Member SILVESTRE REYES, and fellow Benefits Subcommittee member CORRINE BROWN who have joined me on this important legislation.

I would also like to thank the authors of the Independent Budget who brought this critical issue to our attention. In short, current law subjects many hospitalized veterans to a financial hardship. Let me explain further.

An inequity exists in current law controlling the beginning date for payment of increased compensation based on periods of incapacity due to hospitalization or convalescence. Hospitalization in excess of 21 days for a service-connected disability entitles the veteran to a temporary total disability rating. This rating is effective the first day of hospitalization and continues to the last day of the month of hospital discharge. Similarly, where surgery for a service-connected disability necessitates at least 1 month’s convalescence or causes complications, or where immobilization of a major joint by cast is necessary, a temporary total rating is awarded effective the date of hospital admission or outpatient visit.

While the effective date of the temporary total disability rating corresponds to the beginning date of hospitalization or treatment, under current law (38 U.S.C. §5111) the effective date for payment purposes is delayed until the first day of the month following the effective date of the increased rating.

This provision deprives veterans of any increase in compensation to offset the total disability due to which temporary total disability occurs. This depriviation and consequent delay in the payment of increased compensation often jeopardizes disabled veterans’ financial security and unfairly causes them hardships.

The Hospitalized Veterans Financial Assistance Act of 2002 would allow for payment of benefits in all hospitalization and convalescent claims to begin effective the first day of the month in which hospitalization or treatment begins.

Mr. Chairman, once again the nation’s soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines are on foreign soil either engaged directly with an enemy or on alert to respond as necessary to assure our citizens’ right to live in freedom. Let us in Congress assure these dedicated men and women that we will provide for those who bear today’s and tomorrow’s battles and not force them to endure a financial hardship.

President Abraham Lincoln said it best, “...what is fairly due from us here, in the dispensing of patronage, towards the men who did the fighting for us, by the man who did the fighting for us, who were not content with saving our country... is that, other claims and qualifications being equal, they have the better right; and this is especially applicable to the disabled soldier.”

TRIBUTE TO MR. CLIFFORD C. LAPLANTE
HON. NORMAN D. DICKS
OF WASHINGTON
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, March 20, 2002

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a lifetime friend and a great American, Mr. Clifford C. LaPlante. Cliff is about to retire after more than 50 years of dedicated service to our country and to the defense and aerospace community.

Bom and raised in upstate New York, Cliff began his most distinguished career in the aeronautical arena with the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War. An acquisition specialist, Cliff dedicated himself to ensuring that American forces were equipped with the most capable equipment that American industry could provide. As we hear in the media about the critical roles of Air Force systems such as the C-5 Galaxy and the F-110 engine, Cliff contributed to the vision of saving our country...is that, other claims and qualifications being equal, they have the better right; and this is especially applicable to the disabled soldier.”

HONORING OTTERBEIN COLLEGE, NCAA MEN’S DIVISION III NATIONAL CHAMPIONS
HON. PATRICK J. TIBERI
OF OHIO
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, March 20, 2002

Mr. TIBERI. Mr. Speaker, while the big school college basketball championship is still to be decided, we in Central Ohio are already celebrating the Otterbein College Cardinals’ victory in the NCAA Men’s Division III championship game. The Cardinals came from 11 points behind in the second half to crush Elizabethtown 102–83 and bring the national title home to Westerville, Ohio.

The victory topped a spectacular season for Coach Dick Reynolds and his squad. The Cardinals finished first in the tough Ohio Athletic Conference during the regular season, then won the conference tournament en route to an overall 30–3 record. It’s a homegrown success story too, with each player coming from the Buckeye State and 11 of them from the Central Ohio area.

Otterbein is no stranger to basketball success. The Cardinals’ title came in their third trip to the Final Four in Reynolds’ 30 years with the program.

Their games weren’t on ESPN and you won’t find them on your tournament bracket sheet. But some of the best basketball in the