Total disability rating corresponds to the beginning 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 deprivation and consequent delay in the payment of increased compensation often jeopardizes disabled veterans’ financial security and unfairly causes 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, in the dispensing of patronage, towards the men who have served the country, is the bottom 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.”

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 longtime friend and a great American, Mr. Clifford C. LaPlante. Clifford is about to retire after more than 50 years of dedicated service to our country and to the defense and aerospace community.

Born 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 KC-135 aerial refueling fleet, I would point out to my colleagues that these systems were developed and deployed under the watchful eye of Cliff LaPlante.

As an Air Force legislative affairs officer, Cliff became well known to the members of the Armed Services and Appropriations Committees. He quickly became an asset to members and staff alike for his concise and timely responses to the many questions that arose during consideration of Defense department budget requests. The reputation Cliff developed as a trusted and admired member of the Air Force community is applicable to the disabled soldier.

My personal association with Cliff began in 1970 when Cliff decided to forego a much-deserved promotion to full Colonel in favor of joining The Boeing Company as its first full time liaison representative to the Congress. During his eight years with Boeing, Cliff continued the fine legislative work he had begun with the Air Force and he became involved in many vital defense programs such as the AWACS, Air Command Post and the KC–135 re-engining program.

In 1979, Cliff began the General Electric Company chapter of his career, which has lasted twenty-three years. Cliff continued to build on the legislative work he began during his tenure with the Air Force and Boeing and was at the very center of the major defense issues of the day. Cliff distinguished himself with his role in the KC–135 re-engining program and during “The Great Engine War” where GE competed, and won, a place for its F110 engine on the F–16. American business schools now view “The Great Engine War” as a classic case study on how defense procurement should be done.

Now, after more than 50 years of dedicated service to his country, the Congress and the aerospace community, it is about to retire from GE and will begin what is perhaps his most noble endeavor. Together with his wife, Cecilia, Cliff has established a charitable foundation, “Children Come First,” that is dedicated to helping underprivileged children in Peru. Those of us who have worked with Cliff know that he will bring the same spirit and vigor that has exemplified his past undertakings to his foundation and that he will certainly continue to “Bring Good Things to Life” for underprivileged kids.

Mr. Speaker, I know I speak for all my colleagues in the House who have known and worked with Cliff over the years when I say we will miss him but wish him well in the next chapter of his fascinating career.