
SENATE COMMITTEE ON MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Senator Bob Archuleta, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AJR 15

Hearing Date: 8/25/25

Author: Alanis

Version: 6/11/25

Urgency:

Fiscal: No

Consultant: Bill Herms

Subject: The Major Richard Star Act

DESCRIPTION

Summary:

Urges the United States Congress (Congress) to pass the Major Richard Star Act to ensure veterans with disabilities receive their full United States Department of Defense (DoD) retirement pay and United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability compensation without offset.

Existing law:

- 1) Requires veterans who are medically retired from the military with less than 20 years of service (often referred to as "Chapter 61 retirees") to have their military retirement pay reduced by the amount of disability compensation they receive from the VA for combatrelated injuries. (Title 10 of the United States Code (USC) § 1414)
- 2) Permits, under the Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay program, an exception to having their military retirement pay reduced for veterans with at least 20 years of service who are medically retired and have a VA disability rating of 50% or higher. (Title 10 USC § 1414, 38 USC § 5304 & 5305)
- 3) Outlines the regulations and processes for military personnel who are medically retired or separated due to physical disabilities that render them unfit for service. (Title 10 USC Chapter 61)

This bill makes the following findings:

- 1) H.R. 2102 and S. 1032, also known as the Major Richard Star Act, presented by the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate, seek to amend federal law to expand eligibility for concurrent receipt of disability compensation and retirement pay for veterans.
- 2) Current federal law requires a dollar-for-dollar offset of disability compensation and retirement pay for a veteran with a disability who was medically retired with fewer than 20 years of service, denying them the full benefits they earned through their service and sacrifice.

- 3) Approximately 50,000 veterans with disabilities, including those who sustained combat-related injuries, are affected by this offset, resulting in significant financial hardship, with an average loss of \$1,200 per month in earned benefits.
- 4) The Major Richard Star Act aims to correct this injustice by allowing an eligible veteran with a disability to receive both their full DoD retirement pay and VA disability compensation.
- 5) The Major Richard Star Act has garnered significant bipartisan support in Congress, with substantial cosponsorship in both the House of Representatives and the Senate.
- 6) California is home to one of the largest veteran populations in the nation, with many veterans with disabilities who have served honorably and who are impacted by the current offset policy.
- 7) Numerous veterans' organizations have endorsed the Major Richard Star Act, highlighting its importance in ensuring that a veteran with a disability receives the benefits they rightfully earned.
- 8) Congress has a duty to care for veterans with disabilities, ensuring they receive the support and benefits earned through their service.
- 9) Veterans with disabilities have advocated for the elimination of this offset, underscoring the physical, psychological, and financial burdens they face due to this policy; and, AJR 15 Page 2.
- 10) The Major Richard Star Act aligns with the nation's commitment to honor and support all veterans, including those in California, by ensuring they receive the full benefits they earned through their service, regardless of their length of service or immigration status.

Resolves that the California Legislature recognizes the urgent need to address this injustice and support veterans with disabilities who have sacrificed for our nation.

Resolves that the Legislature urges Congress to pass the Major Richard Star Act to ensure that veterans with disabilities receive their full DoD retirement pay and VA disability compensation without offset.

Resolves that the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United States, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to the Majority Leader of the United States Senate, to each Senator and Representative from California in the Congress, and to the author, for appropriate distribution.

BACKGROUND

The Major Richard Star Act would change current policy, which prevents some service members with combat-related injuries from receiving both retirement and disability benefits. Federal law requires a dollar-for-dollar offset of disability compensation and

retirement pay. Therefore, service members with less than 20 years of service and a disability rating of less than 50% experience a dollar taken from their retirement for every dollar they receive in disability pay.

H.R. 2102 (Bilirakis) was introduced into Congress on March 14, 2025, and S. 1032 (Blumenthal) was introduced into Congress on March 13, 2025, together they are known as the Major Richard Star Act, which will allow wounded veterans to keep the full military benefits they have earned through their service and sacrifice. According to Congressman Bilirakis, the Major Richard Star Act will rectify an injustice that keeps combat disabled Veterans from receiving full military benefits. Currently, over 50,000 medically retired Veterans are denied their full retirement pay and disability compensation.

The Major Richard Star Act would repeal this unfair offset, allowing disabled veterans to receive both their retirement pay and their disability compensation. The Major Richard Star Act is named in honor of Major Richard A. Star—a father, husband, and decorated war veteran who, as a result of his combat-related injuries, was medically retired. Major Star sadly lost his battle with cancer on February 13, 2021. The brave men and women who return from serving our country should be able to receive the benefits they are promised.

Military retirement pay and service-connected disability compensation are two completely different benefits. One does not diminish the merits of the other. The Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Ranking Member, Senator Blumenthal, states, "This measure [S. 1032] corrects one of the deepest injustices in our present veterans' disability system. It is unacceptable that tens of thousands of combat-injured veterans are denied the full military benefits they earned. Our bipartisan bill will right this longstanding injustice and finally provide these military retirees who have already sacrificed so much their full VA disability and Defense Department retirement payments."

COMMENT

According to the author, "Veterans and their families have borne the immense cost of our nation's freedom with courage, it is our duty to honor them with the full benefits they've earned, without any reduction. The current policy unjustly diminishes retirement pay and disability compensation for thousands of disabled veterans, imposing financial hardships that fail to reflect the full scope of their sacrifices. This change is urgently needed to ensure these heroes receive the complete support they deserve, upholding a commitment to their well-being that matches their service."

POSITIONS

Sponsor: Author.

Support:

None on file.

Oppose:

None on file.

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