



RESILIENCE THROUGH REMEMBRANCE

**Submitted by Gold Star Spouses of America, Inc.
Statement for the Record
December 3, 2025**

U.S. House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

**H.R. 6047, Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson
Veterans Benefits Expansion Act of 2025**

Chairman Bost, Ranking Member Takano, and members of the Committee:

On behalf of Gold Star Spouses of America, Inc. (GSSA), thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding H.R. 6047, *Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act of 2025*. GSSA represents the surviving spouses of those who died in service or as a result of service-connected conditions. Our mission is to ensure that survivors, who live every day with the consequences of military service, receive fair, adequate, and long-overdue support.

We appreciate the Committee's willingness to bring forward legislation that increases Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) for the first time in more than three decades. While this bill is a modest step, it is an important one. H.R. 6047 begins to acknowledge the reality survivors have lived with for far too long: DIC has not kept pace with economic demands or the federal survivor standards that guide other agencies.

DIC Has Fallen Behind Federal Survivor Standards

DIC is the core survivor benefit administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. It exists to replace income lost when a service member dies on active duty or when a veteran dies of service-connected causes. However, DIC's value has steadily eroded. Today, DIC

replaces 43% of the compensation paid to a veteran rated 100% disabled, far less than the 55% provided to surviving spouses of federal civilian employees.

The principle behind DIC is clear: when a loved one dies due to military service, the family should not fall into financial instability. Since DIC has not been modernized since 1993, its value relative to other federal survivor programs remains significantly lower, leaving surviving spouses with a benefit that replaces far less income than comparable federal programs.

H.R. 6047 would finally begin to change this trajectory. The bill adds a 1% increase above COLA annually for the next five years for all DIC recipients, rank-based and flat-rate alike. This does not achieve parity, but it does acknowledge the inequity and begins the process of correcting it.

GSSA will continue to advocate for full parity through the Caring for Survivors Act. We view H.R. 6047 as a first step, not a final answer. We appreciate the Committee for taking this step after decades with no movement.

Honoring the Namesakes: Sharri Briley and Sergeant Eric Edmundson

The individuals for whom this bill is named reflect two different but equally enduring forms of sacrifice that continue long after headlines fade.

Sharri Briley is the surviving spouse of CW3 Donovan Lee “Bull” Briley, an Army Special Operations helicopter pilot killed in Mogadishu in 1993 during Operation Gothic Serpent, known widely as the “Black Hawk Down” incident. Sharri has spent more than three decades rebuilding her life while carrying the weight of that loss, and she has used her own experience to advocate for surviving military spouses nationwide and is a founding charter member of Gold Star Spouses of America, Inc.

Sergeant Eric Edmundson survived catastrophic injuries sustained in Iraq on October 2, 2005. His anoxic brain injury ended his ability to speak or walk independently, and he requires round-the-clock caregiving support. His story reflects the extraordinary realities faced by catastrophically injured veterans and the families who care for them every day.

Naming this bill for Sharri and Eric rightly acknowledges that the burden of service does not end when the uniform comes off, and that families continue to absorb the long-term consequences of military service.

The Human Impact: Survivors Behind the Policy

Behind every DIC recipient is a family rebuilding life after loss. While the proposed increase is modest, its impact is very real.



SSG John Burton, U.S. Army

Emily Burton (Kentucky) is a substitute teacher raising a son. Emily still drives the 2005 truck her husband maintained before his death in 2017. Major repairs and Kentucky's high vehicle taxes make replacing it impossible on her current income. A DIC increase would provide room in her budget for reliable transportation, a basic necessity for any household.



MSgt Dennis Story, U.S. Air Force

When Suzanne Story's (California) husband died in 2016, her income dropped by 75% overnight. DIC barely covered her mortgage. She now relies on roommates to stay afloat. A modest increase in DIC would allow her to stabilize her living situation without depending on a revolving set of tenants.



CPT James Peterson U.S. Army

Maggie Peterson (New York) was widowed at the young age of 22 in 1971. Maggie was left with \$236 per month in DIC, and an eviction notice was delivered the day before her husband's funeral. While rates have increased since then, the purchasing power and adequacy of DIC have not. Her story underscores how long this problem has existed.



E-4 Robert Stevens U.S. Army

Vicki Stevens (Florida) left her job to care for her husband after his service-connected disabilities ended his ability to work. Their savings were exhausted during those years until his death in 2018. Now approaching seventy, she struggles to make ends meet on DIC and Social Security. An increase would help her maintain stability in her remaining years.

These stories reflect thousands of similar experiences across all states, ages, eras, and conflicts.

GSSA's Position on H.R. 6047

GSSA supports H.R. 6047 as a first step toward correcting decades of inequity. We are grateful for any movement that improves DIC for surviving families, particularly during a period of fiscal constraints.

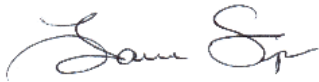
- Full equity will also require passage of the Caring for Survivors Act.
- We will continue to work with the Committee to pursue comprehensive reform until survivors receive the same federal standard applied elsewhere in government.

For more than thirty years, surviving spouses have lived with a system that has not kept pace with either inflation or with the standards applied to other federal employees. H.R. 6047 does not solve the problem, but it begins to open the door.

GSSA supports this bill because any progress after three decades of inaction is meaningful. We remain committed to achieving full parity. We respectfully urge the Committee to advance H.R. 6047 and to continue working with survivors and veterans service organizations to pass the comprehensive reforms contained in the Caring for Survivors Act.

The families of America's fallen heroes deserve nothing less.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Tamra Sipes", written in a cursive style.

Tamra Sipes, National President
Gold Star Spouses of America, Inc.