



January 22, 2014

The Honorable Bernie Sanders  
Chairman, Veterans Affairs Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Sanders:

The National Military Family Association is a long-time advocate for improving the quality of life of our military family members who sacrifice greatly in support of our Nation. For this reason, our Association supports the *Veterans Health and Benefits Improvement Act, S.1950, the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014*.

We are especially appreciative of the inclusion of a provision to repeal the unfair 1 percent cut to the Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) for working age military retirees as established in the Balanced Budget Act and included in the recently passed Omnibus Appropriations bill. We strongly oppose legislation to reduce COLA for military retirees because it breaks faith with currently serving service members and retirees. We firmly believe that changes in retirement compensation and benefits should not be done piecemeal or before Congress receives the recommendations of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission that Congress itself established.

We thank you and the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee for including several provisions that support the survivors of those who have died because of their service, and those currently serving who will soon transition to veteran status. We believe that the more military families are prepared for transition, the more successful they will be. In particular, we appreciate the inclusion of provisions to:

- Authorize Iraq and Afghanistan era surviving spouses receive the Post-9/11 GI Bill via the “Gunnery Sgt. John D. Fry Scholarship Program”
- Authorize in-state tuition rates at public colleges for all student veterans using the new GI Bill
- Allow retention of the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation payment by eligible widows who remarry at age 55
- Improve care and services for veterans who were sexually assaulted during their military service
- Extend the VA health care enrollment opportunity for OIF-OEF veterans from 5 to 10 years
- Renew the VOW to Hire Heroes Act veterans retraining assistance program
- Honor as veterans certain career Reserve members eligible for reserve retired pay.

Thank you for recognizing the sacrifices of our service members and their families and for standing up to protect the benefits they were promised and have earned. If you have any questions, please contact Kathleen Moakler, Government Relations Director, at 703.931.6632 or [KMoakler@militaryfamily.org](mailto:KMoakler@militaryfamily.org).

The National Military Family Association is the only national organization whose sole focus is the military family and whose goal is to influence the development and implementation of policies that will improve the lives of the families of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and

the Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. For more than 40 years, its staff and volunteers, comprised mostly of military family members, have built a reputation for being the leading experts on military family issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary T. Scott". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary T. Scott  
Chairman, Board of Governors