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## *House of Representatives* A SIMPLE SOLUTION: NO SURVIVOR'S BENEFIT PLAN OFFSET

**HON. BOB FILNER**  
OF CALIFORNIA  
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**MR. FILNER:** Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I rise today to speak about a bill to restore equity to the survivors of our nation's veterans, the Military Survivors' Equity Act (H.R. 1592).

It is hard to believe that we continue to condone a system that penalizes the aging survivors, mostly widows, of the veterans of our country, but that is exactly what the Military Survivors' Benefit Plan does! When a member of the military retires, he or she may join the Survivors' Benefits Plan, known as the SBP. After paying a premium for many, many years, the retiree expects that his or her spouse will receive 55 percent of the retired military pay if the veteran dies. But this is not the case!

As I said, most of the survivors who receive SBP benefits are military widows. You may not realize that when these widows who are receiving SBP benefits turn 62, a Social Security offset causes their benefits to be reduced from 55 percent to 35 percent of their husband's military retired pay. This occurs even when the Social Security comes from the wife's employment!

What does this reduction mean to our nation's military widows? I have received many, many letters on this topic. Let me read from two:

*My husband, who served in the Army for 20 years, was on Social Security disability because of heart problems and could no longer work. He died when I was 61 years old. I was doing okay, paying my*

*monthly bills and having enough left for groceries, but when I turned 62, I was notified that my SBP was reduced from \$476 to \$302. What a shock! This was my grocery money that they took away from me.*

And a second:

*While my husband was alive, we worked out a budget for me in case he died. I felt secure in the knowledge that he had provided for me by joining the Survivors Benefits Plan. I could not believe it when I learned that I was not going to get the amount we were promised. I cannot believe that our government would do this to the widow of a veteran.*

It is past time to change this misleading and unfair law. We must provide equity to the surviving spouses of our military retirees. My bill would fix this problem by eliminating the callous and absurd reduction in benefits and give what is expected and what is deserved: 55 percent of the military retired pay. To put it simply, no offset. A simple solution to a difficult problem, an equitable solution to a mean-spirited practice.

Colleagues, please join me in co-sponsoring H.R. 1592, the Military Survivors' Equity Act. Let us do this for our veterans and for their surviving spouses. Let us stop the pain and anguish that we are causing them.