



Why do we need the Supporting Veteran Caregivers Act?

This legislation will ensure that Veteran caregivers who have been improperly removed from the Caregivers program or had their benefits reduced will receive the support and assistance they deserve.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (Caregivers program) was created in 2010 and provides services and supports to caregivers of post-9/11 Veterans with service-connected disabilities, including a monthly stipend of up to \$2,500 for eligible caregivers. In the years following the creation of the program, reports surfaced that local VA medical centers were discharging Veterans and their caregivers from the program at varying rates and for reasons that were not always adequately conveyed to Veterans or their caregivers. Despite two years of repeated calls from Congress to improve the administration of the Caregivers program and to review the cases of the Veterans that were discharged, there are renewed allegations that Veterans and their caregivers continue to be inappropriately discharged or have their eligibility re-determined with inadequate, unclear and inconsistent explanation. To date, the VA has only reviewed a fraction of the cases of Veterans who were discharged from the program or had their benefits decreased.

Following the implementation of the MISSION ACT, another generation of Veterans will become eligible for the Caregivers program as caregivers of pre-9/11 veterans will be able to access services and supports. This necessary expansion represents an important step in providing assistance to Veterans, regardless of when they served, and families. In addition to the numerous steps that the VA must take to ensure that the expansion of the Caregivers program is successful, more needs to be done by the VA to review the decisions already made to discharge or change the benefit level of Veterans. The VA's failure to re-evaluate these cases has created an unfair situation for Veterans, and creates a dangerous precedent as the program is set to expand.

What will the Supporting Veteran Caregivers Act do?

The bill will do the following:

- Direct the VA to reevaluate the cases of all Veterans and their caregivers who were discharged from the program or who had their benefits decreased based on eligibility to ensure that the decision was made correctly.
- Offer re-instatement in the Caregivers program or a restoration of benefits to any Veteran and caregiver that was found to have been improperly removed from the program or who had their benefits improperly reduced.
- Provide retroactive payment of benefits to all Veterans and caregivers who were found to have been improperly discharged from the program during the reevaluation process or who were found to have had their benefits improperly reduced.