

SPOUSAL AND SURVIVOR BENEFIT
PROGRAM COMMITTEE REPORT
REGIONS 6-9

Committee Members:

Jennifer Ellis, Region 8 Director – Co-Chair S&S Benefit Program

Gail Dubois Brouard, Chapter 630, Louisiana

Craig Wade, VVA Dual Member Chapter 904, Alaska

Dawn Wait, Chapter 805, Oregon

Kathy Andres, National Vice President, Advisor

The current brochure for S&SB is needing to be re-ordered as the quantity on hand at National is running very low. Subsequently, Nancy Switzer, who originally created the brochure, Sharon Hobbs, Kathy Andres, Nina Schloffel, both of us co-chairs Beverly Pounds and myself, agreed on changes via a ToGo meeting that are necessary before sending it to print. These changes to the content represent a revised version which includes, for example, removing phone numbers which are continuously updating, inserting a disclaimer as rules are frequently changing with the VA and under Dependent's Education benefits from 43 months to 36 months. We discussed changing the cover and unanimously agreed to an updated version. The brochure will now compliment the Paper Safe which will look more professional. I am excited and honored to be a part of our new S&SB Brochure revised edition. There will be 30K printed in quantities of 50 per pkg.

The S&SB Program Regions 6-9 committee will be researching H.R. 1083 which is a bill "To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve and to expand eligibility for dependency and indemnity compensation paid to certain survivors of certain veterans, and for other purposes." The Act may be sited as the "Caring for Survivors Act of 2023". This was referred to the Committee on Veteran's Affairs February 17, 2023 by Mrs. Hayes and Mr. Fitzpatrick. To summarize this bill, if approved, would increase the amount of dependency

and indemnity compensation (DIC) for surviving spouses. In addition, the Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. are not allowed to lobby votes or to be observed enlisting co-sponsors who are desperately needed to push this vote to the floor. The latest action taken was on 3/20/2023 where the bill was referred to the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs by the Committee on Veteran's Affairs. The upside to this is that the VVA can openly support this bill and assist in its progress. There is always hope that they may jump on board and pave the way for success.

I would also like to mention that the "From Heartbreak To Hope" grief recovery program is certainly benefiting our Survivors here on the west coast. I am observing hands-on that the need is tremendous and that the program is literally saving our survivors from loneliness, isolation and in some cases feelings of despair. I understand that this is a separate program but I believe it should be linked to our S&SB program on the web site as it should be considered essential. The encouragement that this program is bringing to individuals who have lost their loved one is incredible. One member stated, "This group is the highlight of my month." I am grateful for all of those involved in the presenting of the training material, Nina Schloffel, and the development of the program itself, Sharon Hobbs and Kathy Andres.

I look forward to this next term and working to better our Spousal and Survivor Benefit Program where needed.

Jennifer Ellis
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