



TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS
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April 24, 2020

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chairman, Senate Veterans Affairs Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jon Tester
Ranking Member, Senate Veterans Affairs Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mark Takano
Chairman, House Veterans Affairs Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Phil Roe
Ranking Member, House Veterans Affairs Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Moran and Takano, and Ranking Members Tester and Roe,

We, the undersigned military and veterans service organizations, representing millions of current and former service members, veterans, National Guard and Reserve, their families and survivors, applaud your leadership in requesting that Department of Defense Secretary Mark Esper activate all members of the National Guard under Title 32 federal orders for COVID-19 support. We stand with you to ensure that all Reserve Component members responding to this pandemic have the full weight of the federal government behind them and are guaranteed the appropriate benefits.

Currently, there are more than 43,000 members of the National Guard activated to fight COVID-19 but not all are serving under federal orders. Their service, even within their state, is part of an essential whole of government response to stop a deadly global pathogen; one which has no respect for borders or duty status. Guard members are serving on the frontlines alongside their Active Duty counterparts but do not earn the same benefits.

Captain Douglas Hickok, a member of the New Jersey National Guard, died March 28, 2020 of COVID-19. He was on state orders, not federal. At this time, his widow and four children will not receive monthly survivor compensation or education benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs, healthcare or the Death Gratuity from the Defense Department, or many state benefits.

We respectfully request that the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees quickly pass legislation to secure federal survivor benefits to the families of Guard members activated under state orders who die of COVID-19 related causes. The National Guard has always answered when our nation needs them and they deserve the benefits earned for such selfless service.

We greatly appreciate the work you and your colleagues are doing on behalf of our Reserve Component families to quickly address this critical issue. If you have any additional questions, please contact Candace Wheeler at candace.wheeler@taps.org or Ashlynn Haycock at ashlynn.haycock@taps.org.

Respectfully,

Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA)
American Military Society (AMS)
American Red Cross
AMSUS, the Society of Federal Health Professionals
Association of the United States Army (AUSA)
Association of the United States Navy (AUSN)
Blinded Veterans Association (BVA)
Blue Star Families (BSF)
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service (COAUSPHS)
Elizabeth Dole Foundation (EDF)
Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the U.S. (EANGUS)
Fleet Reserve Association (FRA)
Gold Star Wives, Inc. (GSW)
High Ground Veterans Advocacy (HGVA)
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA)
Military Chaplains Association (MCA)
Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)
Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH)
Modern Military Association of America (MMAA)
National Association of State Approving Agencies (NASAA)
National Association of Veteran Program Administrators (NAVPA)
National Military Family Association (NMFA)
Naval Enlisted Reserve Association (NERA)
Non Commissioned Officers Association (NCOA)
PsychAmor
Psych Hub
Sea Service Family, Foundation
Student Veterans of America (SVA)
The Independence Fund
The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA)
Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)
United States Army Warrant Officers Association (USAWOA)
Veterans Education Success (VES)
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW)
Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA)
Wounded Warrior Project (WWP)