



OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
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JUL 15 2004

PERSONNEL AND  
READINESS

The Honorable Duncan Hunter  
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The committee report (H. Rept. 108-106) accompanying H.R. 1588, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004, Public Law 108-136, page 329, directs the Secretary of Defense to report on the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP).

The Secretary of Defense was directed to review active duty SBP benefit levels awarded to survivors under different circumstances of death, the procedures used by the Department of Defense to operate the program, and the desired objectives of the program, and to propose legislation to ensure equitable treatment for the survivors of all members, regardless of the circumstances of death.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004 contained four legislative provisions that address and resolve the concerns highlighted in the committee report. Specifically, the legislation provides for SBP options for active duty deaths that were previously only available to the survivors of members who were retired at the time of their death or retirement eligible in the case of an imminent death.

The Department is grateful for the enacted legislation, which allows for equitable benefits for the survivors of members who die on active duty regardless of the circumstances of death. The Department of Defense appreciates your support for our military members and their families.

A similar letter has been sent to the Chairman, Senate Committee on Armed Services.

Sincerely,

  
Charles S. Abell  
Principal Deputy

cc:

The Honorable Ike Skelton  
Ranking Member

