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Attachments:

Senate urged to provide Gold Star parents with nursing-home care benefits

WASHINGTON (July 2, 2010) - Leaders of The American Legion are urging members of the United States Senate to pass legislation that would benefit the elderly parents of servicemembers who died while serving their country.

The bill, H.R. 4505, would allow any "Gold Star" parent - one who has lost a child during military service - access to veterans' homes administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Currently, Gold Star parents can reside in a state veterans' home only if *every one* of their children died while serving in the armed forces. The bill was introduced by Rep. William "Mac" Thornberry, R-Texas, in late January and passed the House of Representatives unanimously on June 30.

But the measure's fate in the Senate is in doubt, according to House Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Bob Filner, D-Calif.

The American Legion is appealing to the U.S. Senate to provide the well-earned benefit to Gold Star parents. Barry Searle, director of the Legion's veterans affairs and rehabilitation division, expressed the organization's support of H.R. 4505 in congressional testimony last May. He said, in part, "We believe firmly that a commitment is made not only by and to service members...but also to family members who must say good bye to their loved ones who head into combat to protect the freedoms of this nation."

Searle said that current regulations "impose too high a threshold of suffering on surviving parents when it requires that *all* children must have died while serving on active duty."

The American Legion's National Executive Committee adopted a formal resolution calling for amendment of the current restrictions last fall; the House bill was introduced in January.

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