The American Legion

OFFICE OF THE
NATIONAL COMMANDER

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October 8, 2013

Honorable Ron Barber
U.S. House of Representatives
1029 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Barber:

On behalf of the 2.4 million members of The American Legion I would like to express our strong support for your draft legislation that would to make appropriations available to ensure the continued payment of a death gratuity in the event of the demise of certain members of the Armed Forces, and certain other persons who pass away during a federal government shutdown.

Congress has an obligation to put uniformed members and veterans ahead of politics, and the fact that funding for veterans' burial programs and associated supported services like death gratuity payments are going unfunded due to political gamesmanship is unconscionable.

These programs are vital to our veteran community and need to be funded immediately, and without interruption. Our federal government must never put veterans or active duty service members in this kind of position. It is imperative for Congress to understand that The American Legion strongly objects to the cessation of any active duty or veteran benefits, or services, that put our country's defenders and loved ones at risk. It is for this reason that The American Legion passed several resolutions which expressly state our opposition to reduction in benefits. Specifically Resolution 59 encourages Congress to ensure that any benefit in force at the time of initial enlistment not be reduced in value, and that benefits are to remain in force throughout the entire military career and retirement of a servicemember. Even when the government cannot agree on anything else, it *must* agree that taking care of the families of the fallen must never be in question.

The American Legion applauds you for the priority that you are placing on this nation's service members and veterans, by tackling the challenge of funding these vital programs. We stand with you in your efforts to immediately pass meaningful appropriations that support veterans programs. Thank you for your support of our nation's service members, veterans, and their families.

Sincerely,

DANIEL M. DELLINGER
National Commander