

**The Honorable Michael Bilirakis
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Subcommittee on Benefits**

April 11, 2002

I want to thank Chairman Simpson and Ranking Member Reyes for inviting me to testify before the Benefits Subcommittee this morning. I appreciate being given the opportunity to discuss my legislation, H.R. 1108, which provides that the remarriage of the surviving spouse of a veteran after age 55 shall not result in termination of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC).

As my colleagues know, Dependency and Indemnity Compensation is the benefit accorded to the surviving dependents of those members of the Armed Forces who died while on active duty or of a service-connected cause. **DIC is the only federal annuity program that does not allow a widow who is receiving compensation to remarry at an older age and retain her annuity.** To illustrate this point, I have attached a chart which shows how remarriage affects federal survivor programs to my written testimony. As you will see from this chart, all other federal survivor programs allow a widow to retain her benefits if she remarries at age 55 or 60.

I have heard from military widows from across the country who have found someone they would like to spend the rest of their lives with but cannot afford to do so because of the current law. They have expressed deep frustrations about not being able to remarry. Many of these women lost their husbands at a very young age and have been alone for a long time. They have finally found someone to share their lives with but they are afraid to remarry because they will lose their DIC benefits.

I think it is a wonderful thing if an older person finds companionship, falls in love and decides to marry. I don't think we should be discouraging such marriages by making them financially burdensome. For those remarrying after the age of 55, it is often the case that both partners are living on fixed incomes. The prospect of one partner losing financial benefits as a result of the marriage is a real disincentive. In fact, current law makes it virtually impossible for some couples to marry after age 55 because they simply cannot afford to do so and continue to support themselves.

Therefore, I have once again introduced legislation that would allow a military widow to remarry after age 55 and retain her DIC compensation. My bill, H.R. 1108, makes a simple change that could mean a great deal to those who find themselves in this predicament, and I hope you will join me in supporting this change.

I would be happy to answer any questions.

How Remarriage Affects Federal Survivor Programs

Federal Program	Effects of Remarriage
DIC Benefits	Remarriage terminates benefits
Civil Service Survivor Benefits	Remarriage under age 55 terminates benefits Remarriage at age 55 or over has no effect on benefits
Federal Employees Compensation Act	Remarriage under age 55 terminates benefits Remarriage at age 55 or over has no effect on benefits
Railroad Retirement	Remarriage under 60 (50 if disabled) terminates benefits Remarriage at age 60 (50 if disabled) or over has no effect on benefits
Social Security	Remarriage under 60 (50 if disabled) terminates benefits Remarriage at age 60 or over (50 if disabled) has no effect on benefits
Military Survivor Benefit Plan	Remarriage under age 55 terminates benefits Remarriage at age 55 or over has no effect on benefits