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House of Representatives

FULL AND IMMEDIATE CONCURRENT RECEIPT!

HON. BOB FILNER
OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MR. FILNER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to let everyone know of a bill I have introduced that will eliminate what we call the Disabled Veterans Tax and to provide immediate concurrent receipt of military retired pay and VA disability compensation to all deserving disabled military retirees.

H.R. 3730 is called the Immediate and Full Repeal of the Disabled Veterans Tax Act of 2004 and does exactly what the title says. It eliminates the years of waiting before all disabled military retirees receive all the retired pay and compensation they have earned and deserve.

Last year, our Nation's veterans waged a long and determined campaign to eliminate this Disabled Veterans Tax. As my colleagues know, we did take a step that some say was a legitimate compromise but I call an insult to our veterans. That law makes veterans with a disability rating of 50 percent or more wait 10 years before their tax is completely eliminated. A great

number of those veterans are elderly and unfortunately may not live to see the day that they get their full compensation.

Even worse, fully two thirds of America's disabled veterans have been left behind and will continue to be taxed as before, nearly 400,000 of our veterans. Despite the actions of Congress, the Disabled Veterans Tax is alive and well.

Some of the veterans left behind include a veteran of the Kuwait theatre who had below-the-knee amputation after being hit by a drunk driver while jogging near the Pentagon to maintain physical fitness. He does not qualify under the act we passed. Neither does a retiree who cannot work on a family farm because of pain, numbness, and osteoarthritis of both feet due to exposure of cold during noncombatant military service; a veteran who lost an eye when an air hose accidentally detached from an airplane being worked on and who cannot work as an airline pilot. He still pays the tax; as does a

(over)

female retiree who has weekly panic attacks and chronic sleep disturbances as the result of a sexual assault, which occurred while on active duty.

Mr. Speaker, we took the first step towards eliminating the Disabled Veterans Tax, but I would give us a grade of incomplete. We did not do the "A" work that our veterans deserve. During the time I have been in Congress, I cannot recall more than one or two other issues where I have received so many letters, e-mails, and phone calls. Our veterans have been telling us that this is an important issue to them. They

deserve that we complete our work and do it at an "A" level.

I understand there are costs to concurrent receipt, but I also understand that the now disabled veterans did not hesitate when they were called to duty. They have returned home with disabilities they have had to live with ever since. How can we doubt the imperative that we keep our promise and give them what they deserve? They earned their military retired pay. They deserve their VA disability compensation. We should not make them wait any longer for justice to prevail.