

Rothman Fights To Provide Full Benefits To Disabled, Retired Veterans

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Calls On House Republican Leadership To Allow Vote On
Measure To Fully Provide Both Disability & Retirement Benefits

Washington, DC - In an effort to provide veterans with the full benefits they deserve, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ9) last night signed a petition to force a House vote on the Retired Pay Restoration Act of 2003 -- a bipartisan proposal to immediately authorize full payment of both retirement pay and disability compensation to half a million disabled military retirees. Currently, veterans who retire with 20 years of honorable service and who also have a service-related disability are not permitted to collect retirement and disability pay concurrently.

"By refusing to pay disabled veterans their full retirement and disability benefits, the Republican House leadership is penalizing them for getting injured while defending our country," Rothman said. "The least we can do for these permanently disabled veterans is to ensure that they receive the full disability and retirement benefits they were promised."

The petition on concurrent receipts (retirement and disability payments) that Rothman signed is the only way to get the measure considered. Even though the measure has bipartisan support in the House with 320 cosponsors, the Republican House leadership has failed to schedule the measure for a vote. If the petition, which is known as a discharge petition, gets 218 signatures, then the House would consider the measure under the discharge rule. A discharge petition is the main mechanism to force a House vote on legislation that the leadership refuses to bring to the floor.

"Disabled veterans have been ignored for too long as they fight for their right to receive both their disability and retirement benefits," Rothman said. "I am saddened by the fact that the Republican House leadership has stalled action on this bill. I am committed, however, to doing whatever is necessary fulfill our promise and show our gratitude to our disabled veterans for their service to this country."

In addition to his support of the Retired Pay Restoration Act of 2003, Rothman has also been a fighter for veterans by helping to increase the level of funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs in the Fiscal Year 2003 budget to \$63.8 million, which is \$6.2 million more than President Bush requested.

Rothman is also recognized as a leader in Congress in the fight to reverse the Bush Administration's budget cuts and restore health care benefits to Priority 8 veterans - those who annually earn more than a geographically-mandated, low-income threshold. Additionally, Rothman has been at the forefront of the battle to fix the injustice that more than 437,000 disabled military retirees face each month when their military pay is reduced by the amount of their disability benefit. Rothman is the cosponsor of legislation that would allow veterans who were wounded while serving their country to receive both veterans' disability compensation and retirement benefits at the same time.

Earlier this month, the Senate approved an identical concurrent receipts measure to provide full retirement and disability benefits to veterans.

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