

SENATE MILITARY AND VETERANS' AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 913

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: FEBRUARY 24, 2020

The Senate Military and Veterans Affairs Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 913.

This bill requires the payment of the \$750 annual compensation payable to a surviving spouse of a blind or severely disabled wartime veteran to begin from April 9, 1985 for veterans who died before that date and from the date of the veteran's death, regardless of when the surviving spouse files the application for this benefit, for veterans who died on or after that date. Surviving spouses were first made eligible for this benefit on April 9, 1985 by P.L.1985, c.116. Under current regulations of the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs, a surviving spouse is eligible for this benefit from the date of application.

This lifetime benefit is statutorily available to a veteran who was blinded in service during any war including specifically World War II and the Korean Conflict, or who was severely disabled as a result of service during any war including specifically World War II, the Korean conflict, or Vietnam, although the department has made this benefit available to veterans who served in other wars or military emergencies. A veteran who applied for this benefit within one year of military discharge received payments beginning with that year. A veteran who applied after one year received payments from the date of application. This same requirement that payments begin from the date of application should not apply to surviving spouses because at the time of the veteran's death it is known that he or she was blind or severely disabled as a result of wartime service.