

February 6, 2026

Dear Representative Dana C Jones,

I am writing to you to express my support for HR644 which has a hearing scheduled for February 17<sup>th</sup> at 1pm in the Ways and Means Committee. I understand that HR644 defines terms and clarifies the real estate tax exemptions for qualified veterans and surviving spouses of those veterans. Thank you so much for sponsoring HR644.

I am your constituent in district 30A asking you for your help. In 2023-24, when Senate Bill 667 became law, this had a significant negative financial impact on me, I believe, due to unintended wording in the way the law was written. The bill is already a correction to earlier bills however I believe it needs to be corrected again.

A section of this Senate Bill 667, Section 7-208, refers to Surviving Spouse of Disabled Veterans. I am a surviving spouse as my husband, James Lee Howard, died due to asbestos exposure during his career in the US Coast Guard. After his death the Veterans Administration (VA) granted my eligibility of **Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)** but I was denied real estate tax relief based on Jim's having not received a "posthumous Veterans Administration rating of 100%"

I quote from the VA: "The Veterans Benefits Administration (VA) can't issue a disability benefits rating after a veteran's death. The VA" - rating - "**Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)** to surviving spouses and dependent children if the veteran died from a service-connected cause. A veteran may be eligible for DIC if they: **Died from a service-connected causes.**"

The section of the Senate Bill 667 that pertains to this wording is:

**7-208(a)(3)(ii). (ii) "Disabled veteran" includes an individual who qualifies posthumously for a 100% service-connected disability.** Thus, **this is impossible** to qualify posthumous, per the Veterans Administration rating rules, for a % rating after death. **No veteran after death "qualify posthumously for 100%".**

I feel strongly that the intent in changing the wording of the previous bill was:

- to give relief to surviving spouses whose spouse died from a service-related death and
- to provide real estate tax benefits to the surviving spouse after the service-related death of the veteran spouse.

Otherwise, why would the earlier bill have been corrected? This issue could be solved by **changing** the wording from qualifies "**posthumously for a 100% service-connected disability to "posthumously for a DIC service-connected disability** complying with the Veterans Administration posthumous "rating" for a service-connected death.

Thank you for your consideration in **changing the wording** in Senate Bill 667, Section 7-208 from a - posthumously rating of 100% to the VA posthumously "rating" DIC.

Sincerely yours,

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