



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

SENATE BILL 349 – SUPPORT

Property Tax Exemption – Disabled Veterans Senate Budget and Taxation Committee February 12, 2020

Good afternoon Chairman Guzzone and Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee. My name is Brian Smith. I am a retired Navy Officer and a Veteran volunteer with the Maryland Military Coalition.

The Maryland Military Coalition is a **nonprofit, all volunteer, Veterans advocacy group** representing the interests of Maryland Veterans, Service members, and their Families. Our alliance consists of sixteen organizations, listed on the following page, with over 100,000 members. We represent about one-fourth of Maryland's Veterans, Service members, and their Families.

The Maryland Military Coalition **supports Senate Bill 349.**

As you know this bill expands the eligibility threshold for a property tax exemption for the dwelling house of a severely disabled veteran from a 100% permanent, service-connected disability rating to an 80% permanent, service-connected disability rating.

An 80% permanent disability rating reflects a severe disability, where the life and livelihood of the Veteran will be significantly impacted. Such a Veteran is far less likely to be able gain and maintain employment and is far more likely to require the assistance of a caregiver.

Since the caregiver is often the Veteran's spouse, the spouse is similarly disadvantaged in maintaining meaningful employment. The cumulative effect exacerbates the challenge of owning and remaining in a home.

In one of my final Navy assignments, I had the honor of leading a medical holding unit, assisting over 180 wounded, ill, and injured Sailors through the Military-Veterans Affairs disability rating process and their transition back to civilian life. I noted a distinct demarcation in the overall health and well-being of Sailors that were rated at 50% or higher, with those rated 80% or higher being dramatically worse.

Their cumulative, permanent medical conditions would dramatically, often devastatingly, impact the rest of their lives. They are amongst our most deserving, yet most vulnerable citizens.

The Maryland Military Coalition believes we must honor the service and acknowledge the sacrifice of our severely disabled Veterans. **Senate Bill 349** does so, by providing greater economic viability for a severely disabled Veteran and the Veterans' family caregivers by ensuring their ability to afford and remain in their home.

We respectfully request a favorable report for Senate Bill 349.

For questions or additional information, please feel free to contact me at
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Member Organizations, Maryland Military Coalition

James P. Monahan
Air Force Sergeants Association

Stacy P. May
American Military Society

Lynn A. Nash
Commissioned Officers Association of the
US Public Health Service

Wilbert B. Forbes
Disabled American Veterans

Sheldon Goldberg
Distinguished Flying Cross Association

Pleasala J. Collins
Fleet Reserve Association

Evan A. Buttrick
Jewish War Veterans of the USA

Steve L. Bloodgood
Maryland Air National Guard Retirees'
Association

Harvey Kaplan
Military Officers Association of America

Charles Egbert
Military Order of the Purple Heart

Mervyn Rice
National Association for Black Veterans

Michael P. Hays
Naval Enlisted Reserve Association

Christian Andreasen
NOAA Association of Commissioned Officers

Catherine L. McGraw
Society of Military Widows

Arthur L. Cooper
The Retired Enlisted Association

Thomas C. Williams
Veterans of Foreign Wars