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House of Representatives

VETERANS' COMPENSATION COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT ACT OF 2011!

HON. BOB FILNER
OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. Speaker, like the chair, I rise in support of passage of this COLA act, S. 894, sponsored by my good friend, Senator Patty Murray of Washington, the chair of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. And I'm proud to work closely with her in my role as the ranking member of the House committee. I thank the leadership of this body for bringing this uncluttered version of the veterans' COLA bill to the floor, which passed in the Senate last month, so that we may pass it without delay and get it to the President's desk.

The veterans' COLA increase will be 3.6 percent for 2012, a figure tied directly to the Social Security COLA whose beneficiaries will also see the same increase in their payments.

As it has since 1976, Congress, through the passage of the Veterans' Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act, directs the Secretary of the VA to increase the rates of basic compensation for disabled veterans and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation, what we call DIC, to their survivors and dependents, along with other benefits, in order to keep pace with the rate of inflation. This bill will enable disabled veterans, their families, and their survivors from World War I through the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Many of the over 3.5 million veterans who receive disability compensation benefits depend upon these payments not only to provide for their own basic needs, but for those of their spouses, children, and parents as well. Without an annual COLA increase, these veterans, their families, and survivors would likely see the value of their hard-earned benefits slowly erode.

Mr. Speaker, I think we would be derelict in our duty if we failed to guarantee that those who sacrificed so much for this country are able to receive benefits and services that keep pace with their needs and inflation.

We funded the war; let's fund the warrior and his or her family and survivors. Let's ensure that their benefits make ends meet at the end of the month. I urge my colleagues to support this COLA bill, and I thank Senator Murray for sponsoring this important measure.