



Lt. Gen. Dana Atkins
USAF (Ret)
President and CEO



Support Combat-Injured Veterans by Passing the Major Richard Star Act

Background: Combat-injured veterans forced into early retirement by their injury are not receiving their vested longevity pay. Reducing retirement pay because of a disability is an injustice. The Major Richard Star Act (H.R. 1282/S. 344) will correct this injustice.

UNDERSTANDING THE STAR ACT

The Major Richard Star Act would support over 50,300 combat-injured veterans by allowing concurrent receipt of vested longevity pay and VA disability. These individuals, often seriously disabled, are subject to an offset where their retirement pay is reduced for every dollar of VA disability received. In some cases, their retirement pay is completely eliminated.

These two different payments, from two different sources, are for two different purposes. DoD is responsible for retired pay covering vested years of service (in the past), while the VA is responsible for disability compensation covering a lifelong injury (in the future).

Congress acknowledged this as an injustice and partially fixed it through the FY 2004 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The part that wasn't fixed includes those who were injured in combat and forced to retire before completing 20 years of service, resulting in an offset where their retirement pay is reduced for every dollar of disability provided by the VA.

Reducing retirement pay due to a combat injury is clearly an injustice for combat-injured veterans, many of whom require full-time care. Spouses/family often give up their jobs to help their loved one. This increases financial concerns and stress.

Passing the Star Act will bring much-needed support to the 50,300 combat-injured veterans who often have compounding challenges from their combat injury.

MAJ. RICHARD STAR, USAR (RET)

Major Star was an Army combat engineer who led route clearance and route construction missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. He was an energetic advocate for his fellow combat-injured veterans and passed away last year.

Combat engineers cleared the roads of dangerous IEDs and saved countless military and civilian lives. In the year after our withdrawal from Afghanistan, now is the time to clear the road for our combat-injured veterans to receive concurrent receipt.

COST CONCERNS

The Star Act will authorize retirement pay for our combat-injured veterans calculated by years of service and grade achieved. DoD has a well-established structure for retired pay and would no longer pay Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) to those who receive concurrent receipt. The Star Act is sensitive to cost and does not authorize back pay.

Funding for the Star Act should not come at the expense of our uniformed community. Residual funds for Afghan Security Forces could have supported our combat-injured, some of whom were wounded from green-on-blue attacks from the same Afghan Security Forces we funded.

MOAA'S POSITION

Our combat-injured veterans earned their vested retirement pay for dedicated years of service and earned their disability compensation through extraordinary personal sacrifice. To reduce retirement pay because of a combat injury is an injustice.

MOAA remains committed to working with Congress to find solutions consistent with previous efforts to enable these retirees to receive the compensation they earned through both their service and their sacrifice.

Congress:

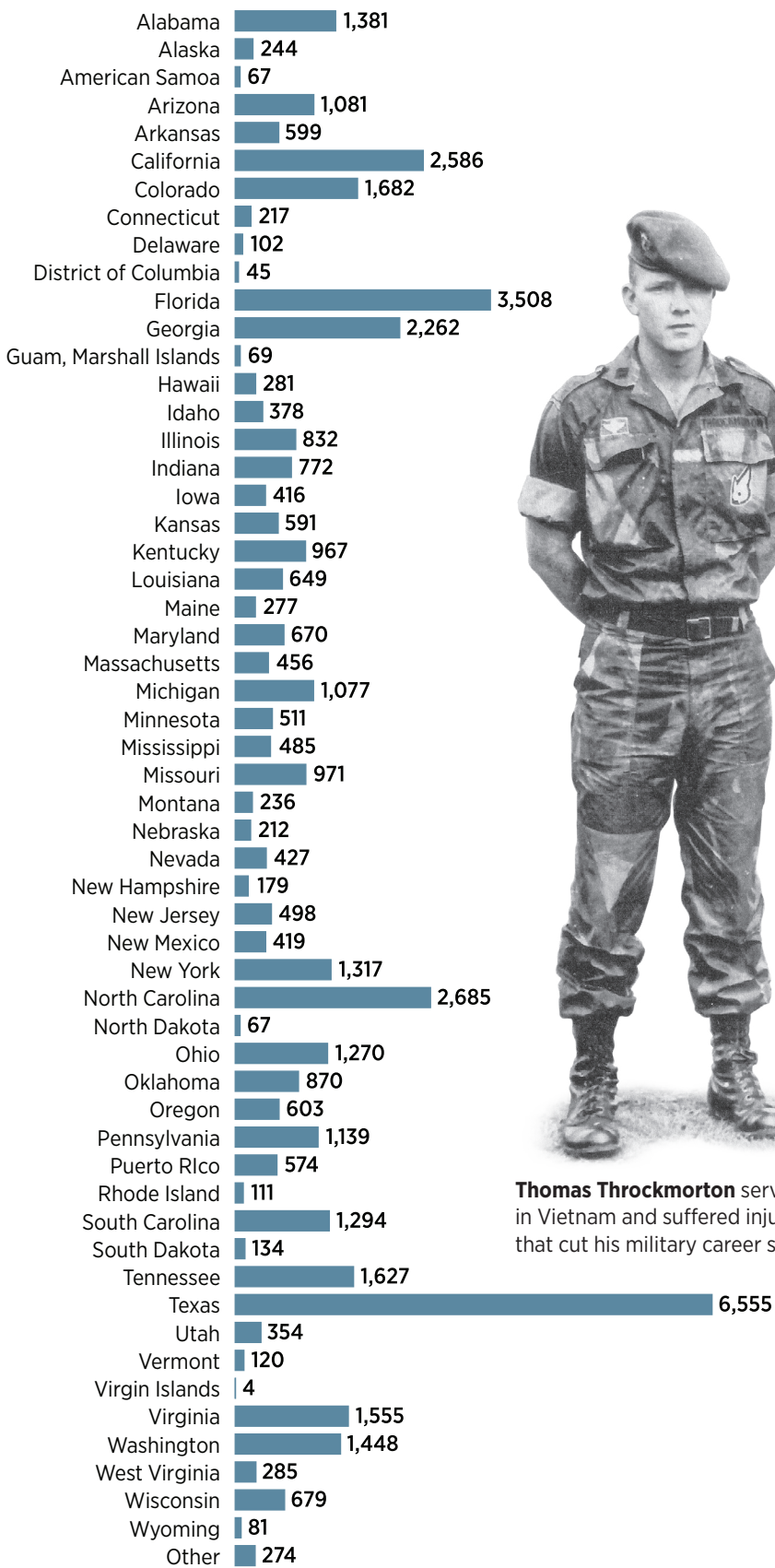
Support H.R. 1282/S. 344, The Major Richard Star Act, to ensure combat-injured veterans receive the vested retirement pay they earned and are no longer punished financially because of their injuries or illnesses.

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COMBAT-INJURED RETIREES BY STATE



Thomas Throckmorton served in Vietnam and suffered injuries that cut his military career short.

Combat-Injured Retirees Span Generations of War

Thomas Throckmorton, a young and career-focused Army officer, did not want to miss combat in Vietnam. It was 1964, and he believed the war would soon be over. He sought an overseas assignment and served alongside paratroopers in the 5th Vietnamese Airborne Battalion. On this first trip to Vietnam he survived a bullet to the stomach.

He healed, continued his career, and deployed again to Vietnam in 1969. This time, small arms fire pierced a helicopter he was riding in. The helo crashed in a paddy field and he was thrown out the open door. His pelvis broke in 24 places, his hip was destroyed, and his prior bullet wound added complications.

“Well that’s the end of your Army career,” a doctor quipped as Throckmorton arrived for surgery. Though Throckmorton was able to serve a few more years, the injuries led to a premature end to his career.

“I never forgot that. Of course, I was in it for the duration,” said Throckmorton, a medically retired officer and Chapter 61 retiree whose retirement pay is offset due to his VA disability pay. After 13 years in, his career aspirations were cut short. His retirement pay has been shortchanged for decades.

Because Throckmorton’s injuries occurred in combat, he would be among those retirees to benefit from the Major Richard Star Act. The beneficiaries of this law would span generations.

“I’m ... at the end of my life, so it’s not going to help me that much. But it will be nice for people to get it,” said Throckmorton.

While Congress attempted a partial solution for combat vets with the Combat-Related Special Compensation program, it doesn’t come close to fulfilling the offset, Throckmorton stressed.

“The thing that I never could quite understand is why, if they enacted Combat-Related Special Compensation, to replace the concurrent receipt ... why not make it fairly similar?”

— By Tony Lombardo, MOAA staff

Note: Data as of Sept. 30, 2020
SOURCE: DOD

GRAPHIC BY NICOLE CROSS/MOAA

PHOTO: COURTESY OF MAJ. THOMAS THROCKMORTON, USA (RET)