



A JOINT MESSAGE FROM

DAV and the DAV Auxiliary

On November 20, 2019, Senator Tina Smith (MN) introduced S. 2810, the Veterans Hearing Benefits Act of 2019.

Currently, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) does not provide a presumption of service connection for hearing loss or tinnitus. All veterans must establish exposure to acoustic trauma in service, provide a diagnosed hearing loss or tinnitus, and a medical opinion linking them together. However, this can be difficult to overcome as in many cases acoustic noise exposure in service is not documented or hearing exams were not provided.

S. 2810 would consider hearing loss, tinnitus, or both, incurred in or aggravated by active military service for a veteran who served in combat and for veterans in a military occupational specialty or equivalent who were likely exposed to sufficient high levels of acoustic trauma to result in permanent hearing loss, tinnitus, or both.

Veterans can be rated at 0% disabled for hearing loss and be required to use hearing aids. It is a general principle of the VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities that ratings are not offset by the function artificially restored by a prosthetic device. Therefore, veterans with a 0% rating for hearing loss that requires hearing aids should not be held to a different standard.

Additionally, S.2810 would require the VA Schedule of Rating Disabilities to establish a minimum disability rating for a veteran who requires a hearing aid for a service-connected disability.

Consistent with DAV Resolutions Nos. 016 and 107, we support S. 2810, as it would provide presumptive service connection for hearing loss and tinnitus, while also providing a compensable evaluation for service-connected hearing loss that requires a hearing aid. Take action today and contact your Senators and urge them to co-sponsor and support S. 2810. Thank you for all you do for America's veterans and their families.