

San Ramon Express

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Congressman Jerry McNerney reintroduced legislation on Wednesday to increase certain types of military specialty pay for the first time in years. H.R. 1110, the Combat Act, increases hostile fire pay, imminent danger pay, hazardous duty pay and family separation allowance.

"I've traveled to Afghanistan as part of a bipartisan congressional trip to see first-hand the situation on the ground and visit with our service members," McNerney said. "Many of the men and women I spoke with talked about the struggles they face providing for their families while they're away from home and in dangerous conditions."

The legislation is supported by organizations such as the National Military Family Association, the Military Officers Association of America and the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

"Our service members also asked me to work on increasing pay for the troops," continued Rep. McNerney. "Since my visit, I've strongly advocated for increasing pay for our troops, many of whom haven't seen a raise in military specialty pay in years. Increasing pay for the men and women who are putting themselves in harm's way is simply the right thing to do."

Hostile fire pay, currently set at \$225 per month, is for service members exposed to hostile fire or explosion of hostile mines. Imminent danger pay, also set at \$225 per month, is for service members in specifically designated places deemed to pose a threat of physical harm or imminent danger due to insurrection, war, or terrorism. Hazardous duty pay, currently set at a maximum of \$250, is available to service members who encounter particularly hazardous types of duty, including regular participation in aerial flight, parachute jumping and explosive demolition. Hostile Fire Pay, Imminent Danger Pay and Hazardous Duty Pay cannot be collected simultaneously.

Family separation allowance, currently set at \$250 per month, is a partial reimbursement for service members involuntarily separated from their dependents and is intended to provide for extra expenses that result from separations.

The legislation offered by McNerney increases hostile fire pay, imminent danger pay and hazardous duty pay to \$260 per month and increases family separation allowance to \$285 per month.

"The National Military Family Association appreciates Rep. McNerney's work to increase the Family Separation Allowance," said Kathleen Moakler, of the National Military Family Association. "This allowance is very important to military families when a service member is deployed. We have long supported an increase to keep the family separation allowance in line with escalating expenses for military families and thank Rep. McNerney for his leadership on this issue."

The Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH) also expressed support for the bill. "We can never do enough for our brave men and women in uniform. This is an important step in recognizing their sacrifices," said MOPH National Commander Clayton Jones.

Congressman McNerney introduced a similar version of the Combat Act in 2010, and provisions from that bill subsequently passed the House with bipartisan support. H.R. 1110, the legislation introduced today, is expected to be referred to the House Committee on Armed Services for consideration.