

Military Family Basic Needs Allowance

Examples of Household Eligibility and Benefits

Creating a “Military Family Basic Needs Allowance” would address a longstanding and shameful shortcoming in military compensation policy that has left thousands of military families — often lower ranking enlisted service members with multiple dependents — to endure the painful reality of food insecurity. This unacceptable situation is the result of a technical error that has prevented struggling military families from qualifying for needed federal nutrition assistance benefits. Far too many military families in need find themselves ineligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and some school feeding programs due to the inclusion of the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) as counted income in determining program eligibility. This barrier to SNAP access has led thousands of military families to turn in desperation to food pantries that operate distribution programs on or near every military installation in the U.S. The severity of this problem and the need for more complete data was documented in [GAO Report 16-561](#) in July 2016 and recently in this [NBC News special report](#) from July 2019.

Contrary to claims by the Pentagon and some policymakers that military members already receive appropriate compensation and that the economic hardships faced by military families are the result of personal financial mismanagement, a significant number of service members and military spouses — primarily junior enlisted families — report challenging financial situations and difficulty making ends meet for their household with their low pay that and high costs of living. Based on the [U.S. Federal Poverty Guidelines](#) and [Military Active and Reserve Component Pay Tables](#), below are three examples of families that would benefit from the bipartisan and targeted proposal.



Example 1:

E4 / 4 years of service – household of 4 (3 dependents)
 Base pay = \$2,634.60 / month – \$31,615.20 / annual
 130% Federal Poverty Guideline for household of 4 = \$34,060
 Difference between 130% FPG and annual base pay = \$2,444.80
 Monthly difference / MFBNA benefit amount = \$203.73

Example 2:

E6 / 6 years of service – household of 6 (5 dependents)
 Difference Base pay = \$3,354.90 / month – \$40,258.80 annual
 130% Federal Poverty Guideline for household of 6 = \$45,708.00
 Difference between 130% FPG and annual base pay = \$5,449.20
 Monthly difference / MFBNA benefit amount = \$451.10

Example 3:

E2 / less than 2 years of service – household of 4 (3 dependents)
 Base pay = \$1,942.50 / month – \$23,310 / annual
 130% Federal Poverty Guideline for household of 4 = \$34,060.00
 between 130% FPG and annual base pay = \$10,750
 Monthly difference / MFBNA benefit amount = \$895.83