

Chuck Schumer protests benefit denials to Iraq's 'Pvt. Ryans'

BY STEPHANIE GASKELL
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

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In a real-life version of the movie "Saving Private Ryan," Army Spec. [Jason Hubbard](#) agreed to an honorable discharge last year after his two brothers were killed in combat in [Iraq](#).

Now, the 33-year-old [California](#) native has been stripped of many of the military benefits given to soldiers who serve in war zones.

"It is absurd and unjust to deny full benefits to frontline soldiers who chose the humane options of honorary discharge after losing siblings who are also in combat," said [Sen. Chuck Schumer \(D-N.Y.\)](#).

Schumer introduced a bill with [Sen. Dianne Feinstein \(D-Calif.\)](#) Thursday that would make sure these soldiers get their full benefits.

Called the Hubbard Act, the legislation would waive a requirement that "sole survivors" who chose to be honorably discharged pay back enlistment bonuses and separation pay, lose access to home loan programs and transition health care coverage, as well as G.I. Bill benefits.

"These folks have sacrificed for this country in a way that most people can't imagine," said [Paul Rieckhoff](#), founder of Iraq and [Afghanistan](#) Veterans of [America](#). "It's an outrage. It shouldn't take a press conference from senators to fix it."

Since 9/11, 51 soldiers have been honorably discharged with "sole survivor" status.

Army Spec. [Ivan Medina](#), 26, of [Oneida](#), N.Y., lost his twin brother, [Irving](#), in Iraq in 2003. The only remaining son in his family, he agreed to an honorable discharge after fighting in [Baghdad](#) and [Fallujah](#).

"I sat down with my sister and my parents and I said that it would be their decision - if they wanted me to get out, I would get out," he said. "My mom started crying and said, 'Yes, get out.'"

"My dad said, 'Yeah, we paid our price.'"

Medina wants to attend college, but he found out he no longer is eligible for G.I. Bill benefits.

"It's ridiculous," he said. "I gave an oath to the country that I would defend it and I did. I thought I paid my price in blood, sweat and tears. My brother paid with his life. I don't see how they can deny me what I've worked so hard for. It's not like I'm asking to be rich."

Medina said if this bill isn't passed soon, or if the government doesn't fix the problem on its own, he will try to pay for college himself.

"This administration sent us out there to get killed," he said. "This is the minimum that this President needs to give us."

sgaskell@nydailynews.com