

Military members whose service was involuntarily extended, or whose retirement was suspended between September 11, 2001 and September 30, 2009, due to stop loss are entitled to retroactive payments of \$500 for each month they were extended, according to Department of Defense officials.

But the deadline to receive those benefits is rapidly drawing to a close. The deadline to apply for the benefits is Oct. 21, 2010.

“You served with honor. You did your duty. And when your country called on you again, you did your duty again. Now, it’s time to collect the special pay that you deserve,” said President Barack Obama during a recent White House announcement.

Only about 58,000 of the 145,000 eligible claims have been paid, leaving more than \$300 million available to eligible veterans. The average payout for each veteran is close to \$4,000.

The president said that the program has caused some confusion and skepticism among those who have served.

“Some veterans think this is some sort of gimmick or scam, or that it’s a way for the government to call you back to service. Nothing is further from the truth. You worked hard. You earned this money. It doesn’t matter whether you were active or reserve, whether you’re a veteran who experienced ‘Stop Loss’ or the survivor of a service member who did—if your service was extended, you’re eligible,” said Obama.

The 2009 War Supplemental Appropriations Act established the Retroactive Stop Loss Special Pay and throughout the past year the services have been reaching out to eligible veterans, service members and their families through direct mail, veteran service organizations and the media.

But by law there is no authorization to make payments on claims submitted after Oct. 21, 2010.

Eligible members should print, complete and sign Department of Defense Form 2944, Claim for Retroactive Stop Loss Payment. They must then select the appropriate method for submitting their claim form based upon their service requirements.

The information can be found on their service's stop loss web site, accessible from www.defense.gov/home/features/2010/0710_stoploss/, or call: Army: (877) 736-5554; Navy: (901) 874-4427; Marine Corps: (877) 242-2830 and Air Force: (800) 525-0102.