

FACTS ABOUT SENATOR WEBB'S BIPARTISAN G.I. BILL, THE "POST-9/11 VETERANS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE ACT" (S.22)

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SUMMARY

The bipartisan Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act (S.22), is designed to expand the educational benefits that our nation offers to the brave men and women who have served us so honorably since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The bill would closely resemble the educational benefits provided to veterans returning from World War II. A bipartisan House companion bill, H.R. 5740, was introduced on April 9, 2008.

BACKGROUND

Our country has a tradition – since World War II – of offering educational assistance to returning veterans. In the 1940s, the first “G.I. Bill” helped transform notions of equality in American society. The World War II G.I. bill paid for veterans’ tuition, books, fees, a monthly stipend, and other training costs. Approximately 7.8 million veterans used the benefits given under the original G.I. bill in some form, out of a wartime veteran population of 15 million. For every dollar invested in veterans, seven dollars were generated.

Over the last several decades, Congress passed a number of other G.I. bills that also gave educational benefits to veterans. However, benefits awarded under those subsequent bills have not been as expansive as our nation’s original G.I. bill. Currently, veterans’ educational benefits are administered under the Montgomery G.I. Bill. This program is designed for peacetime – not wartime – service.

MAJOR PROVISIONS

- Increased educational benefits would be available to all members of the military who have served on active duty since September 11, 2001, including activated reservists and National Guard. To qualify, veterans must have served at least three to thirty-six months of qualified active duty, beginning on or after September 11, 2001.
- The bill provides for educational benefits to be paid in amounts linked to the amount of active duty served in the military after 9/11. Generally, veterans would receive some amount of assistance proportional to their service for 36 months, which equals four academic years. Veterans would still be eligible to receive any incentive-based supplemental educational assistance from their military branch for which they qualify.
- Benefits provided under the bill would allow veterans pursuing an approved program of education to receive payments covering the established charges of their program, up to the cost of the most expensive in-state public school, plus a monthly stipend equivalent to housing costs in their area. The bill would allow additional payments for tutorial assistance, as well as licensure and certification tests.
- The bill would create a new program in which the government will agree to match, dollar for dollar, any voluntary additional contributions to veterans from institutions whose tuition is more expensive than the maximum educational assistance provided under S.22.
- Veterans would have up to fifteen years, compared to ten years under the Montgomery G.I. Bill, after they leave active duty to use their educational assistance entitlement. Veterans would be barred from receiving concurrent assistance from this program and another similar program.

CO-SPONSORS, SUPPORTERS

The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act has 57 cosponsors in the Senate, including lead co-sponsors Chuck Hagel (R-NE), John Warner (R-VA), and Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ). The House companion bill, H.R. 5740, introduced by Rep. Harry Mitchell (D-AZ), Rep. Bobby Scott (D-VA), Rep. Ginny Brown-Waite (R-FL), and Rep. Peter King (R-NY), has 302 cosponsors in the House, a majority of its membership. (As of June 11, 2008).

The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act has been endorsed by the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), The American Legion, the Military Officers' Association of America (MOAA), Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), AMVETS, the Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA), the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States (EANGUS), the Student Veterans of America (SVA), the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC), American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and the Partnership for Veterans' Education, a consortium of military, veterans, and higher education associations such as the American Council on Education (ACE) and the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU).

KEY POINTS MADE BY SENATOR WEBB

- **Currently, veterans' educational benefits are administered under the Montgomery G.I. Bill—a program designed primarily for peacetime – not wartime – service.** With many of our troops having served two, three or four tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is past time to enact a new veterans' education program modeled on the World War II era G.I. bill. These individuals have a short window of time in which to take advantage of an educational benefit after serving, and with six years already passed since 9/11, that window is now closing for many.
- **The G.I. Bill of the World War II era sparked economic growth and expansion for a whole generation of Americans; a more robust G.I. bill holds the same potential for today's economy.** The United States has never erred when it has made sustained new investments in higher education and job training – and its veterans. Educated veterans have higher income levels, which in the long run increases tax revenues. Approximately 7.8 million veterans used the benefits in some form, out of a wartime veteran population of 15 million. For every dollar invested in WWII veterans, seven dollars were generated.
- **A strong and reliable G.I. bill will have a positive effect on military recruitment.** Better educated veterans also have a **more positive readjustment experience** and lower levels of post-traumatic stress disorder.
- **The education of our nation's veterans is a cost of war.** A very small percentage of Americans have stepped forward to serve our country through military service; they have earned the right to have a bright future when they have completed their service. A G.I. bill that properly rewards honorable service is the right thing to do. **The estimated \$4 billion a year needed for the program equals one week of war in Iraq and Afghanistan.**
- Three former Presidents, a dozen U.S. Senators, three Supreme Court Justices and fourteen Nobel Prize winners went to school on the G.I. bill. Under today's Montgomery G.I. Bill, these same leaders would receive only a fraction of the money necessary to get the same level of education.