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## *House of Representatives*

# A TOTAL FORCE GI BILL FOR THE 21ST CENTURY!

**HON. BOB FILNER**

OF CALIFORNIA  
IN THE HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, today I urge my colleagues' support of legislation that has been introduced to enhance, improve and modernize veterans' education and training programs. Specifically, I am proud to be an original co-sponsor of H.R. 6250, a bill introduced by Dr. **VIC SNYDER** of Arkansas, a member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Nearly 62 years have passed since congressional enactment of the "Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944", commonly known as the "GI Bill of Rights", by all accounts a landmark legislative accomplishment. Last year marked the 20th anniversary of the implementation of the "Montgomery GI Bill" (MGIB), another critically important legislative measure which has been credited for the creation of the middle class in America.

Now, the time has come to develop a "Total Force GI Bill for the 21st Century." For education and training benefits to remain a relevant recruitment, retention and readjustment tool, we must ensure that VA's education and training programs reflect the current manner in

which individuals earn and learn in today's competitive marketplace.

A "Total Force GI Bill" must also reflect today's military force structure. Clearly, we all recognize the total force policy of our military includes increased activation of the National Guard and Reserve forces. Like no other time in our history have citizen-soldiers sacrificed so much and served with such distinction as they currently do in Iraq and Afghanistan. Since September 11, 2001, nearly 500,000 National Guard and Reservists have been activated, and approximately 40 percent of the troops currently serving in Iraq and Afghanistan are citizen-soldiers. These patriots have earned and deserve high quality education and training benefits, to be used even after they separate from military service. The "Total Force GI Bill" proposal would organize all MGIB programs within a single area of Federal law and under the jurisdiction of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). It would allow members of the National Guard and Reserves to use their education benefits after they separate from military service, for up to a period of 10 years.

I want to work in a bipartisan fashion to improve and modernize the MGIB so that it better reflects current trends in education and vocational training programs. The VA's Advisory Committee on Education and the Partnership for Veterans Education—a group made up of traditional veterans and military service organizations, as well as higher education advocates, all have endorsed the provisions of H.R. 6250. I believe this legislative proposal deserves careful consideration, and I pledge to work to pass the funding needed to support these improvements.