



Action Alert

Legislative Alert #112-22: Support S. 2241, The G.I. Bill Consumer Awareness Act of 2012 VETERANS

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Issue Background: The Post-9/11 G.I. Bill, introduced by Senator Jim Webb (D-VA), was signed into law on 30 June 2008. The bill offered returning servicemembers up to 36 months of benefits including full payment of tuition, book stipends of \$500 a semester and a monthly housing allowance while enrolled full-time (at least 12 credit hours at a four-year institution or the equivalent.) The goal of the bill was to afford this generation's veterans the same type of quality educational benefits that those who served in World War II received. Due to the generous and well deserved benefits now being awarded, some for-profit higher-educational institutions are targeting veterans, while concealing important facts about the institutions and their programs. To ensure the protection of the integrity of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill, Senator Webb introduced S. 2179, the Military and Veterans Educational Reform Act, which was later included in the amended language of S. 2241, the G.I. Bill Consumer Awareness Act of 2012, introduced by the Chair of the Senate Veterans' Affairs (SVA) Committee, Senator Patty Murray (D-WA). The addition of Senator Webb's bill to Senator Murray's bill occurred in a markup on 12 September 2012. The U.S. House of Representatives has already passed similar legislation in the form of H.R. 4057, the Improving Transparency of Education Opportunities for Veterans Act of 2012.

Action Required: Contact your Senators and urge them to support the amended S. 2241, introduced by Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), which now awaits a Senate floor vote. The bill would upgrade consumer education resources for military students and student veterans as well as provide greater transparency and oversight of all G.I. Bill programs.

Details (To Be Put Into Letter):

Servicemembers and Veterans are being unfairly targeted by a handful of unscrupulous for-profit higher-education institutions, hurting military and veteran families as well as causing a bad reputation for institutions that do seek to help these beneficiaries. S. 2241, the G.I. Bill Consumer Awareness Act of 2012, aims to better inform student veterans of the best educational options available, while monitoring higher-educational institutions to better combat fraud and abuses.

Specifically, S. 2241 uses language from Senator Jim Webb's (D-VA) S. 2179, the Military and Veterans Educational Reform Act, which requires all programs receiving funding from the Post-9/11 GI Bill and Tuition Assistance be Title IV eligible, which is already a requirement for schools receiving Pell Grants and other types of federal funding. This

includes accreditation by a Department of Education-approved accrediting agency, an undergraduate withdrawal rate for all students of no more than 33% for new schools and mandated reviews by the Department of Education if an institution has a high dropout or default rate. The bill would also expand the responsibilities of the State Approving Agencies by requiring them to conduct audits of institutions. Finally, it requires the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) to develop a centralized complaints process to report instances of fraud, waste and abuse by educational institutions and requires institutions to disclose graduation rates, default rates and other critical information to potential students.

S. 2241 is legislation aimed at not only protecting the servicemembers and veterans trying to educate themselves, but also the integrity of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill itself. Ensuring that our servicemembers and veterans are not tricked into investing their time and tax-payers' dollars into faulty and dishonest for-profit institutions should be a top priority for the Senate's workload during the "lame-duck" session of Congress. It is imperative that the Senate give this issue a thorough investigation and pass legislation to protect the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill, its beneficiaries and its investors.

Take Action: Click the "Take Action" link at the top of the Alert to immediately email and/or write to your Senators and Representatives. This is the quickest and most effective method of expressing your views to Congress. You can also write and/or e-mail the 'Details' section or edit as you desire for a more personalized communication . Also, contact friends and family and urge them to use the Contact Congress feature on AUSN's website as well. Please direct any questions concerning this issue to our Director of Legislation, Anthony Wallis, at 703-548-5800 or at Anthony.Wallis@ausn.org.