

Thank you to Chairmen Isakson and Roe. There are significant changes that go into effect in 2018. Plan for them. Forever GI Bill - Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act Summaries

I. Reserve Duty That Counts Toward Post-9/11 Eligibility

The time that a Reservist was ordered to active duty to receive authorized medical care be medically evaluated for disability or complete a Department of Defense (DoD) healthcare study on or after September 11, 2001, now counts as active-duty toward eligibility for the Post-9/11 GI Bill program. An individual may use this entitlement to pursue a course of education beginning on or after August 1, 2018.

II. Purple Heart Recipients

Servicemembers and honorably discharged Veterans who were awarded a Purple Heart on or after September 11, 2001, will be entitled to Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits at the 100-percent benefit level for up to 36 months. This is effective on August 1, 2018.

III. Yellow Ribbon Extension to Fry and Purple Heart Recipients

Recipients of the Fry Scholarship and Purple Heart will be covered under the Yellow Ribbon Program. This is effective August 1, 2018.

IV. Yellow Ribbon Extension to Active Duty Servicemembers

Active duty Servicemembers may use the Yellow Ribbon program effective August 1, 2022.

V. Consolidation of Benefit Levels

A. Eliminates the 40-percent benefit level and expands the 60-percent benefit level under the Post 9/11 GI Bill program. An individual with aggregate service of 90 days but less than six months of active-duty service (excluding entry and skill training) now qualifies at the 50-percent benefit level. An individual with aggregate military-service of at least six months but less than eighteen months of active-duty service (excluding entry and skill training) now qualifies at the 60-percent benefit level. This removes the 40-percent benefit level. This section will take effect on August 1, 2020.

Percentage of Maximum Benefit Payable, For military service of at least 36 months - 100%

At least 30 continuous days on active duty and must be discharged due to service-connected disability or received a Purple Heart (Purple Heart effective August 1, 2018) - 100%

At least 30 months, but less than 36 months - 90%

At least 24 months, but less than 30 months - 80%

At least 18 months, but less than 24 months - 70%

At least 6 months, but less than 18 months - 60%

At least 90 days, but less than 06 months - 50%

B. REAP Eligibility Credited Toward Post-9/11 GI Bill Program - Members of the Reserve who established eligibility to educational assistance under the Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP) before November 25, 2015, and lost it due to the sunset provision may elect to have that service credited towards the Post-9/11 GI Bill program.

C. Monthly Housing Based on Campus Student Attends the Majority of their Classes

The law requires the monthly housing allowance (MHA) under the Post-9/11 GI Bill program to be calculated based on the zip code of the campus where the student physically attends the majority of classes, rather than the location of the institution of higher learning where the student is enrolled. This applies to the first enrollment in an educational program on or after August 1, 2018.

D. Changes to Licensing and Certification Charges

Entitlement charges for licensing and certification exams and national tests under the Post-9/11 GI Bill will be prorated based on the actual amount of the fee charged for the test.

E. Assistance for Students Affected by School Closures and Certain Disapprovals

1. VA is now authorized to restore benefits and provide relief to education beneficiaries affected by school closures or specific disapproval. This means payments of educational assistance will not be charged against an entitlement of educational assistance, or counted against the total period for which a beneficiary may receive educational assistance under two or more programs if VA finds that the individual was unable to complete such course or program of study as a result of:

- (a) The closure of an educational institution; or
- (b) the disapproval of the class or a course that is a necessary part of that program because of a new law, regulation, or policy implemented after the individual enrolls.
- (c) not receiving credit, or losing training time, toward completion of the program being pursued.
- (d) VA may treat a course of education that is disapproved under this chapter as being approved, if VA determines, on a case-by-case basis, that the course was disapproved for one of the reasons stated above and continuing the course is in the best interest of the individual

2. This provision takes effect 90 days after August 16, 2017, and applies to courses and programs of education discontinued after August 1, 2015. For courses or programs discontinued during the period beginning January 1, 2015, and ending on August 16, 2017, an individual who does not transfer credits can have all his/her entitlement restored.

3. VA may also continue awarding a monthly housing allowance stipend under the Post-9/11 GI Bill program following a permanent school closure or specific disapproval of a course of study. The changes to monthly housing allowance will take effect on August 1, 2018, and apply to courses and programs of education discontinued on or after August 16, 2017.

VI. Changes to Transfer of Benefits (TEB)

A. Veterans who transferred entitlement to a dependent can now designate a new dependent if the original dependent dies before using the entitlement.

B. Dependents who received transfer of entitlement under the Post-9/11 GI Bill can transfer their entitlement to another eligible dependent if the Servicemember or Veteran who made the transfer subsequently dies.

C. This law applies to deaths on or after August 1, 2009. A dependent to whom entitlement is transferred may use it beginning on or after August 1, 2018.

VII. More Benefits for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Programs

A. VA will provide up to nine months of additional Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to certain eligible individuals who:

1. have or will soon exhaust entitlement of Post-9/11 GI Bill program.
2. apply for assistance, and are enrolled in a program of education leading to a post-secondary degree that, in accordance with the guidelines of the applicable regional or national accrediting agency, requires more than the standard 128 semester (or 192 quarter) credit hours for completion in a standard, undergraduate college degree in biological or biomedical science; physical science; science technologies or technicians; computer and information science and support services; mathematics or statistics; engineering; engineering technologies or an engineering-related field; a health profession or related program; a medical residency program; an agriculture science program or natural resources science program; or other subjects and fields identified by VA as meeting national needs.
3. has completed at least 60 regular semesters (or 90 quarter) credit hours in a field listed above, or has earned a post-secondary degree in one of these fields and is enrolled in a program of education leading to a teaching certification.
4. Priority would be given to individuals who are entitled to 100 percent of Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits and to those that require the most credit hours.

B. VA can pay each eligible individual the benefits for up to nine additional months, but the total may not exceed \$30,000. VA will not be authorized to issue any Yellow Ribbon payments.

1. These additional benefits cannot be transferred to dependents.
2. This expansion becomes effective on August 1, 2019.

VIII. Elimination of 15-year Limitation to use the Post-9/11 GI Bill Program

1. The law removes the time limitation for the use of Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits for individuals whose last discharge or release from active duty is on or after January 1, 2013, children of deceased Servicemembers who first become entitled to Post-9/11 GI Bill program benefits on or after January 1, 2013, and all Fry spouses.
2. All others remain subject to the current 15-year time limitation for using their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits.

IX. Reserve Components Monthly Housing Allowance

A. VA will prorate the monthly housing stipend (also referred to as the “monthly housing allowance”) under the Post-9/11 GI Bill for members of the reserve components of the armed forces.

This change will apply to a quarter, semester or term commencing on or after August 1, 2018.

X. Pilot Programs for Technology Courses

VA will develop a pilot program to provide eligible Veterans who are entitled to educational assistance under chapter 30, 32, 33, 34, or 35 of title 38, United States Code, or chapter 1606 or 1607 of title 10, United States Code, with the opportunity to enroll in high technology programs of

education that VA determines to provide training and skills sought by employers in a relevant field or industry. This change will take effect 180 days after August 1, 2018.

XI. Work Study Expansion

The law removes the expiration date of June 30, 2022, for specific qualifying work-study activities for which an individual may be paid an additional educational assistance allowance. These activities include outreach services for an SAA, providing hospital and domiciliary care and medical treatment to Veterans in a State home, or performing an act relating to the administration of a national cemetery or a state Veterans' cemetery.

XII. Changes to Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance

A. The new law decreases the amount of entitlement that new eligible individuals will receive under the Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance (DEA) program from 45 months to 36 months. This change applies to individuals who first enroll in programs of education after August 1, 2018. Individuals who first enrolled in a program of education before August 1, 2018, would still qualify for a maximum of 45 months of entitlement.

B. This law also increases the amount of educational assistance payable for the pursuit of institutional courses and institutional courses under the Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program. An eligible person will be entitled to a monthly allowance of \$1,224 for full-time coursework, \$967 for three-quarter time, and \$710 for half-time coursework. The increases would be effective October 1, 2018.

XIII. Using the GI Bill at Technical Schools and non-Institutions of Higher Learning (IHLs)

A. Beneficiaries will now be able to use their Post-9/11 educational assistance to pursue accredited independent study programs at the following educational institutions that are not institutions of higher learning (IHLs): area career and technical education schools that provide postsecondary level education and postsecondary vocational institutions. This change went into effect August 16, 2017.

B. Priority Enrollment

VA will improve outreach and transparency to Veterans and Servicemembers by providing information on whether institutions of higher learning administer a priority enrollment system that allows certain student Veterans to enroll in courses earlier than other students. This change went into effect August 16, 2017.

XIV. Informing Schools about Beneficiary Entitlement

VA must make available to educational institutions information about the amount of educational assistance to which a beneficiary is entitled under chapter 30, 32, 33, or 35. This information would be provided to the educational institution through a secure information technology system accessible by the educational institution and would be updated regularly to reflect any amounts used by the Veteran or another individual. A beneficiary pursuing a course of education may elect not to provide the information to an educational institution. This section will be effective on August 1, 2018.

XV. Reserve Component Benefits

The law authorizes service by Guard and Reserve members under 10 U.S.C 12304a and 12304b to receive Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. An individual entitled to educational assistance as a result of this

section may use such entitlement to pursue a course of education beginning on or after August 1, 2018.

This applies to service in the Armed Forces occurring on or after June 30, 2008.

XVI. GI Bill Monthly Housing Allowance

Individuals who first use Post-9/11 GI Bill program on or after January 1, 2018, will receive the monthly housing allowance based on DoD's reduced basic housing allowance (BAH) for monthly housing rates. Those that began using benefits before January 1, 2018, will continue to receive a higher monthly housing rate based on the non-adjusted BAH rates.