

Expanded educational benefits for service members and their survivors — *By LCDR Marc J. Soss, SC, USN*



2009 Supplemental Appropriations Act:

Hidden among the military appropriation provisions of the "2009 Supplemental Appropriations Act" (Public Law No. 111-32) is a provision which expands GI Bill benefits to children of fallen U.S. service members. The provision is known as the "Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship." The benefits include (1) Tuition and fees (limited to the maximum in-state tuition and fees at a public institution); (2) Monthly housing allowance (based upon BAH for an E-5 with dependents); and (3) \$1,000 annual stipend for books and supplies (based on the number of credit hours taken).

Under prior law, a service member had

This year has been filled with new legislation aimed at enhancing educational benefits for service members and their dependents. The following is a brief overview of the legislation:

The College Cost Reduction & Access Act:

The College Cost Reduction & Access Act (CCRA) eliminates the current three-year limitation on loan deferment for certain service members and allows 180-day deferments following demobilization. Both benefits are available to service members regardless of when the loan was originated. Eligibility for loan deferment is limited to individuals serving on active duty or performing qualified National Guard duty during war and a national emergency.

In addition, Reserve, National Guard and retired service members who are called to active duty, while enrolled at an educational institution, will be eligible for a loan deferment. The deferment will last during the service member's mobilization and for thirteen (13) months after completion of his/her service. The loan deferment will expire upon the service member's reenrollment in school.

to serve 6 years with an additional 4-year commitment to earn the right to transfer his or her GI benefits to their dependents. The new law amends the Post-9/11 GI Bill and allows the children of a service member who has died on active duty since 9/11 (1) to qualify for the education benefit; (2) eliminates the minimum military service requirement; and (3) eliminates the 36-month limitation on transferred benefits.

The new law also upgrades the Post-9/11 GI Bill by providing that all of a deceased service member's dependents qualify for their own full 36 months of benefits and may utilize the benefits until age 33. The Post-9/11 GI Bill had limited transferred benefits to no more than a total of 36 months of benefits and terminated benefits when a child reached age 26.

The Higher Education Technical Amendment Bill:

The Higher Education Technical Amendment Bill expands grants to survivors of service members killed in the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars since 2001. Survivors who qualify for Pell Grants will be eligible for the maximum Pell Grant award (\$5,350 for the 2009-10 school year). ⚓