



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF VETERANS PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS

2020 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W • Suite 1975 • Washington, D.C. 20006-1846

August 18, 2017

To say a lot has happened on the legislative front since our last update in May, would be an understatement. NAVPA's Executive Board and Legislative Committee have been extremely active the last few months, continuing to push this year's agenda and advocating on behalf of our membership. The Committee has spent countless hours drafting letters, making phone calls, sending emails, and conducting office visits. The hard work has paid off in the form of new partnerships, a larger voice with Legislators around the country, and significant changes in policy.

There has been a lot of movement on a wide range of veterans' issues over the summer. The first thing you will want to let student veterans returning to campus know is that the Global War on Terrorism Memorial Act has been signed into law. The Act authorizes a memorial to be built on the National Mall in Washington D.C. to honor fallen warriors, service members, veterans, and their families who supported, and continue to support, our country's longest war.

NAVPA was fortunate enough to have two representatives at the George W. Bush Institute's "Veterans Stand To" held in Washington D.C. earlier this summer. The event brought together more than "300 individuals from major corporations, non-profits, higher-education institutions, philanthropic entities, think tanks, federal agencies, congressional leaders, and community organizations to synchronize efforts and improve veteran transition outcomes with a focus on health and wellbeing, education, and employment."

NAVPA President, Keith Glindemann, served on the Education Taskforce for the President George W. Bush Institute for Military Initiatives. The efforts of the Education Taskforce, along with those focused on employment and health and welfare, were highlighted at the Stand To Convening. In addition to receiving updates from Taskforce panels, attendees heard about collaborative efforts being made at senior levels from President Bush, Former First Lady, Laura Bush, Congressmen, and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

One of the Key Goals set by the Education Taskforce was to continue working with the government to modernize the GI Bill and ensure its long-term viability. NAVPA joined



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nearly 40 other veterans service organizations to form a Coalition with the primary purpose of drafting legislation that would improve the GI Bill. 18 pieces of different legislation, many that NAVPA advocated for, were combined to form the “Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017,” also known as the “Forever GI Bill.” Members of the Coalition, including NAVPA’s Legislative Committee and several members of the Board, worked feverishly during the weeks that followed to get Legislators to support the Bill. The combined efforts resulted in the Bill passing the House 405-0, followed by a unanimous vote in the Senate. The President signed the “Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017” on August 16, making the most comprehensive changes to the GI Bill since the passage of the Post-9/11 version.

NAVPA has drafted this list of bullet points to highlight key portions of new law. The full text can be found at www.congress.gov and our partners at Student Veterans of America have posted a detailed summary of the law at www.forevergibill.org.

“Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017”

- Eliminates the time limitation to use the GI Bill for new members of the Armed Forces and those discharged after January 1, 2013.
- Eliminates the 40-percent benefit under the Post 9/11 GI Bill program. Individuals with at least 90 days but less than six months of active-duty service will qualify for the 50-percent benefit level, effective on August 1, 2020.
- Provides 100 percent GI Bill eligibility to Purple Heart recipients since September 11, 2001, effective August 1, 2018.
- Allows Reservists to transfer into the Post-9/11 GI Bill who lost educational assistance benefits when Congress repealed the Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP) in 2016.
- Provides the lesser of nine additional months of Post-9/11 GI Bill or a lump sum of \$30,000 to help student veterans complete a STEM degree, effective August 1, 2019.
- Increases the monthly payment for educational assistance provided under Survivors’ and Dependents’ Educational Assistance Program.
- Changes Survivors’ and Dependents’ Educational Assistance Program from 45 to 36 months of eligibility to beneficiaries, effective August 1, 2018.



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- Allows any remaining entitlement to be transferred to another dependent, if the dependent who originally received the transferred benefits dies.
- Extends the Yellow Ribbon Program to students receiving payments through the Fry Scholarship and Purple Heart Recipients after September 11, 2001.
- Restores GI Bill benefits to students affected by school closures and allows assistance payments to continue for up to 120 days if the school closes during the middle of a semester. Restored benefits will be available 90 days after enactment and applies to schools that closed on or after January 1, 2015.
- Increases the VA reporting fee paid to institutions to \$16 for each individual that it certifies as using GI Bill benefits.
- Requires institutions with 100 or more GI Bill beneficiaries must have a separate budget, accounting for the use of reporting fees, effective August 1, 2018.
- Requires training for school certifying officials at educational institutions approved for GI Bill benefits, effective August 1, 2018.
- Adjusts housing allowances to be calculated based on the location the student attends the majority of his or her classes. This applies to beneficiaries enrolling for the first time after August 1, 2018.
- Housing stipends provided to Reservists called up for active duty during the middle of a month will be prorated, effective August 1, 2018.
- Provides \$30 million to improve IT systems at the VA.
- Extends the VA work-study allowance to December 2022.
- Requires the GI Bill Comparison Tool to indicate whether the school offers priority enrollment.
- Extends the authority for VA's Advisory Committee on Education to December 2022.
- Requires the VA to give educational institutions the ability to view the amount of remaining benefits for students attending that institution, effective August 1, 2018. Beneficiaries may opt out.
- Eliminates the loss of a full month of benefits for licensing and certification tests by prorating the amount to meet the cost of the test, effective August 1, 2018.

The new GI Bill will be paid for by realigning housing payments for Post 9/11 GI Bill beneficiaries to the same rates paid to active duty service members at the E-5 with dependents rate. The annual percentage increase to active duty BAH payments was reduced by 1% a year for five years, but GI Bill payments were exempt. This measure



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realigns the payments so a GI Bill recipient receives the same allowance as an active duty E-5 with dependents. These changes only apply to students who start using education benefits on or after January 1, 2018.

NAVPA is proud to be a member of the Coalition that made these historical changes to education benefits for servicemen and women, veterans, and their family members. The groundbreaking work done with the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees, members of Congress, Committee Chairs, and our colleagues, to gain bipartisan, bicameral support for the new GI Bill is a great example of what can be accomplished when groups with similar interests collaborate to accomplish an overarching goal.

The same model for success will be used at NAVPA's Annual Conference in Atlantic City this October. Representatives from member-institutions around the country will come together to share ideas, learn best practices, hear about research findings, and develop the organization's strategic plan to continue to improve veterans programs. The annual conference is where you help decide how NAVPA will use its voice and leverage its position to support new training, research, policy development, and legislative actions. Please bring your ideas, questions from institutional leaders, and resolution proposals so we can continue to change the paradigm for ensuring veteran success in higher education.

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The National Association of Veterans' Program Administrators (NAVPA) has served as the voice of advocacy for veterans in higher education since its founding in 1975. NAVPA's membership now includes 344 Institutions of Higher Learning across 47 states that represent 431,032 veterans. As a leading service organization focused on the veteran, service member, and military family member experience in higher education, NAVPA is involved in training, research, policy development and proposed legislation.