

STATEMENT BY

G. KIM WINCUP

PRESENTED TO

SUBCOMMITTEE ON BENEFITS  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

May 24, 2001

Mr. Chairman, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, it is a privilege to appear before you to present the recommendations related to the Montgomery GI Bill of the Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance, on which I served as Vice Chairman.

As you are aware, the Commission was created by the Congress to review and assess a range of programs affecting currently serving servicemembers and veterans. The Commission issued its report on January 14, 1999. The Commission's recommendations covered a broad array of programs and issues, but in my mind, the most significant was the proposal to enhance the Montgomery GI Bill by returning to a GI Bill that provides full tuition, books and a monthly subsistence allowance for any school a service person or veteran can qualify to attend.

The Commission's recommendation was based on a conviction that military service is America's most fundamental form of national service, the service of today's personnel is no less valued than those who were conscripted, service personnel and veterans represent an untapped opportunity for the nation, the educational attainment and contribution to the nation of those who have served should only be limited by their own initiative, aptitude and ability, and as Chairman Bob Stump of the Armed Services Committee has stated recently on this subject, we are losing the battle for quality recruits and an enhanced Montgomery GI Bill is needed to make military service the first choice of young men and women graduating from school, rather than the last.

Mr. Chairman, I congratulate the Subcommittee for leading the effort to enhance the Montgomery GI Bill in line with current costs of education. The proposal you are considering today deserves the strongest possible support.

I have had the privilege of serving as Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs during Desert Storm, and have been intimately involved in military personnel matters for a decade and a half before that on the staff of the House Armed Services Committee. I have watched the US military struggle to recruit the quality personnel that are critical for the nation's security. Every time we have let recruiting reach dangerous levels, it has always been a program offering significant educational opportunities to potential recruits that has turned things around, almost always done through the leadership of the Congress.

What you are considering today will not only be very good for our service personnel and veterans who deserve this opportunity, it is an important step toward re-creating one of the most successful programs in our history.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this morning.