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COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

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Miller: “Choice is Not Dictated by Imperial Fiat”

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Today, Rep. Jeff Miller, Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, issued the following statement on President Obama’s Executive Order, “We Can’t Wait:”

“More than 600,000 veterans have used the Post-9/11 GI Bill to improve themselves and their futures through higher education. Consumers should be informed, especially when taxpayer dollars are involved. For example, any student applying for college can access the College Navigator website, which contains 272 data points on every school approved for federal education benefits. This data includes graduation rates, indebtedness, gender, ethnicity, public and private financial aid, school costs, student calculators, and hundreds of other factors related to school quality and performance.

“Veterans should be given every opportunity to make an informed choice about their education, but choice is not dictated by imperial fiat. Accusing the for-profit school system of profiteering, a move designed to put fully accredited and GI Bill-approved colleges and universities—employing thousands of educators—out of business, is not the answer. The President could, instead, use the bully pulpit to encourage states to grant veterans in-state tuition, accept military training credit, and allow credits to transfer from accredited institutions. Each of these would lower the cost of education for veterans, and taxpayers.

“There are already ample resources to police the ‘bad actors’ in the education system—a characteristic not limited to for-profit schools. State Approving Agencies act as VA’s agent and inspect schools as part of the approval process. The Federal Trade Commission can enforce sanctions against tactics like false advertising. And accrediting bodies have the ability to enforce standards and refer violations of law and regulations to the appropriate enforcement agency, while state licensing authorities can also shut down a school’s operations completely.

“This Executive Order represents an unnecessary attack on the free market. As with most industries, the free market will police itself when consumers are equipped with factual information about goods and services they intend to buy. This has the effect of weeding out the bad and rewarding the good. The education industry is no exception.”

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