



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
VETERANS' AFFAIRS
Chairman Phil Roe, M.D.

Section by Section of The Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017

Section 1. Short Title

This section cites the short title of this bill as the “Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017.”

Section 101. Consideration of Certain Time Spent Receiving Medical Care from Secretary of Defense as Active Duty for Purposes of Eligibility for Post-9/11 Educational Assistance.

This section would add time spent on active duty under orders authorized by section 12301(h) of title 10, U.S.C., as qualifying time for the Post-9/11 GI Bill. These particular orders are used when a National Guardsman or Reservist is receiving medical care or is recovering from active duty injuries.

Section 102. Consolidation of Eligibility Tiers under Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

This section would authorize additional GI Bill funding for members of the National Guard and Reserve. This section would increase the amount of money/eligibility that individuals receive who serve at least 90 days but less than 6 months on active duty – it would increase from 40% to 50% benefit payable. It would also increase the amount of money/eligibility that individuals receive who serve at least 6 months but less than 12 months – it would increase from 50% to 60% benefit payable. For a student attending a private school, this would result in approximately \$2300 more a year in tuition than they are receiving now and would receive more money for their housing allowance.

Section 103. Educational Assistance Under Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Program for Members of the Armed Forces Awarded the Purple Heart.

This section would extend full eligibility for the Post-9/11 GI Bill to any Purple Heart recipients since September 11, 2001.

Section 104. Eligibility for Post-9/11 Educational Assistance for Certain Members of Reserve Components of Armed Forces who Lost Entitlement to Educational Assistance under Reserve Educational Assistance Program.

This section would allow certain members of the Reserve component to transfer into the Post-9/11 GI Bill who lost educational assistance benefits when Congress repealed the Reserve Educational Assistant Program (REAP).

Section 105. Calculation of Monthly House Stipend under Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Program Based on Location of Campus where Classes are Attended.

This section would change the way living stipend amounts are calculated, from the current rule that says the living stipend payment is based on where the school is located to instead having the payment calculated based on where the student attends the majority of their classes.

Section 106. Charge to Entitlement for Certain Licensure and Certification Tests and National Tests under Department of Veterans' Affairs Post-9/11 Educational Assistance.

This section would change the current rules that require that a veteran be charged a whole month of entitlement to pay for any national test (GMET, GRE, SAT etc.) or test that is required for state licensing. Instead of a full month of entitlement this bill would require that the test be pro-rated to the amount of the actual cost of the test.

Section 107. Restoration of Entitlement to Post-9/11 Educational Assistance for Veterans Affected by Closures of Educational Institution.

This section would restore entitlement to individuals when their school closes in the middle of a semester. This section would also authorize additional living stipend payments to be paid to students whose school closes in the middle of the semester for no more than 4 months, or the length of the semester, where they were attending training.

Section 108. Inclusion of Fry Scholarship Recipients in Yellow Ribbon GI Education Enhancement Program.

This section would extend the Yellow Ribbon Program to students receiving GI Bill payments through the Fry Scholarship program and those who received a Purple Heart after September 11, 2001. Fry recipients are surviving dependents of servicemembers who died while serving on active duty.

Section 109. Additional Authorized Transfer of Unused Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Benefits to Dependents upon Death of Originally Designated Dependent.

This section would allow a veteran to transfer remaining months of GI Bill entitlement to another dependent if the dependent who originally received the transferred benefits dies before they can use all of the benefits. The section would also allow a dependent to transfer remaining months of GI Bill entitlement to another dependent after the death of the servicemember or veteran.

Section 110. Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship.

This section would authorize VA to provide additional GI Bill funds to help a student veteran complete a STEM degree. They would be eligible to apply for the program, which would pay for the lesser of nine additional months of Post-9/11 GI Bill or a lump

sum of \$30,000. The amount of money that could be spent on this program would not exceed \$100,000,000 in any one fiscal year. These additional benefits would be known as the 'Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship'.

Section 111. Honoring National Service of the Members Elimination of Time Limitation for use of Entitlement.

This section would eliminate the current time limitation to use the GI Bill for new members of the Armed Forces. Student veterans currently have 15 years from the date of their last active duty discharge to use the benefit.

Section 112. Monthly Stipend for Certain Members of the Reserve Components of the Armed Forces Receiving Post-9/11 Educational Assistance.

This section would require VA to pro-rate the GI Bill housing stipend provided to Reservists who get called up for active duty during the middle of a month. Current law prohibits them from pro-rating the stipend so if the reservist is on active duty orders for even one day of a month then they would lose the entire months' worth of VA housing allowance.

Section 113. Improvement of Information Technology of the Veterans Benefits Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

This section would authorize \$30 million to improve GI Bill claims processing and complete their rules-based processing system for these claims.

Section 114. Department of Veterans Affairs High Technology Pilot Program.

This section would authorize VA to conduct a 5-year pilot program that would provide veterans the opportunity to enroll in high technology courses (coding boot camp, IT certifications etc.). VA would enter into contracts with these schools or programs and would provide tuition and fees payments on a sliding scale that incentivizes the schools to graduate the student and ensure they find a job in their field of study. The section would also authorize a living stipend payment equal to the Post-9/11 rate to students while they are using the benefit.

Section 201. Work Study Allowance

This section would repeal the sunset date in the law that allows VA work study benefits for outreach to student veterans and to assist State approving agencies.

Section 202. Duration of Educational Assistance under Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program.

This section would change the number of months of entitlement for individuals who become eligible for the Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program from 45 months to 36 months. This would re-align this program with other GI Bill programs that provide 36 months of eligibility for educational assistance. This change would only apply to individuals that become entitled to this program on or after August 1, 2018.

Section 203. Olin E. Teague Increase in the Amounts of Educational Assistance Payable Under Survivors' and Dependent' Educational Assistance Program.

This section would increase the monthly payment for educational assistance provided under Survivors' and Dependent' Educational Assistance Program by \$200 a month.

Section 301. State Approving Agency Funding.

This section would increase the funding out VA's mandatory account for the State Approving Agencies (SAA) from \$19 million a year to \$21 million a year. This section would also authorize VA to provide an additional \$3 million a year to the SAAs out of the Department's discretionary account. This section would also, beginning in fiscal year 2019, require VA to provide a cost of living adjustment increase to the SAAs budget in an amount that equals the same percentage increase as benefits provided under the Social Security Act.

Section 302. Authorization for Use of Post-9/11 Educational Assistance to Pursue Independent Study Programs at Certain Educational Institutions that are Not Institutions of Higher Learning.

This section would allow an eligible individual to use their GI Bill benefit for an accredited independent study program (including open circuit television) at an educational institution that is an area career and technical education school or a postsecondary vocational school providing postsecondary level education.

Section 303. Provision of Information on Priority Enrollment for Veterans in Certain Courses of Education.

This section would require VA to include on its GI Bill Comparison Tool, information on whether a school has a priority enrollment system in place that allows veterans to enroll in courses earlier than other students attending the school.

Section. 304. Limitation on Use of Reporting Fees Payable to Educational Institutions and Sponsors of Programs of Apprenticeship.

This section would allow VA to provide a fee to schools or a sponsor of a program of apprenticeship for the reports or certifications that these institutions are required to submit to VA about the individuals at their school receiving GI Bill benefits. This section would require VA to provide \$16 to the institution for each individual that they certify as using GI Bill benefits at their institution. This section would also require that schools with 100 or more enrollees using GI Bill benefits, may not use the funds received by the institution from the reporting fees for the institution's general fund and that these funds may only be used for veterans programs at that institution.

Section. 305. Training for School Certifying Officials.

This section would require VA, in consultation with the SAA's, to provide requirements for training for school certifying officials at educational institutions that are approved for GI Bill benefits. This section would also allow VA to disapprove a course of education if a school does not ensure that the school certifying official meets the training requirements.

Section 306. Extension of Authority for Advisory Committee on Education.

This section would extend the authority for VA's Advisory Committee on Education from December of 2017 through to December of 2022.

Section 307. Department of Veterans Affairs Provision of On-Campus Educational and Vocational Counseling for Veterans.

This section would codify VA's Veterans Success on Campus (VSOC) program, which is administered and overseen by the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service (VS&E). There are currently 94 schools with a VSOC program, which provides a VR&E counselor at each school to assist veterans with their transition from military to college life as well as who provide the support and assistance needed to pursue their educational and employment goals.

Section 308. Provision of Information Regarding Veteran Entitlement to Educational Assistance.

This section would require VA to make available to educational institutions, the ability to view the remaining benefit amount for each veteran attending that institution. This section would also allow the veteran or their dependent (if they are a beneficiary of their GI Bill benefits) to opt out of the school's ability to receive such information from VA.

Section 309. Treatment, for Purposes of Educational Assistance Administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, of Educational Courses that Begin Seven or Fewer Days after the First Day of an Academic Year.

This section would provide more flexibility to the school certifying officials if the first day of a course does not start on the first day of an academic term, by allowing the school certifying official to certify the course as beginning on that day first day of the academic term for purposes of certifying a veteran for GI Bill benefits.

Section 401. Eligibility of Reserve Component Members for Post 9/11 Educational Assistance.

This section would make individuals eligible for Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits who have served and who will serve on 12304, 12304(a) and 12304(b) orders. Any active duty service under these Reserve component orders since the enactment of the Post-9/11

Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 would apply for such benefits going forward.

Section 402. Time Limitation for Training and Rehabilitation for Veterans with Service-Connected Disabilities.

This section would also make the 12304, 12304(a) and 12304(b) orders eligible for benefits under the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program in chapter 31 of title 38, U.S.C.

Section 501. Repeal Inapplicability of Modification of Basic Allowance for Housing to Benefits under Laws Administered by Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

This section would be the offset for the package by realigning the living stipend payments for those using the Post 9/11 GI Bill (E-5 with dependents rate) to the same Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) payments currently paid to active duty servicemembers at the E-5 with dependents rate. Several years ago, the annual percentage increase to active duty BAH payments were reduced by 1% a year for five years but GI bill payments were exempt. This bill would re-align these payments so that a GI Bill recipient would receive the same living stipend per month as an E-5 active duty servicemember with dependents. This section also stipulates that these decreases to the annual percentage increase would only be in effect for individuals who first begin using their education benefits on or after January 1, 2018.