

***Enhancement of Recruitment, Retention, and Readjustment
Through Education Act***
Senators Graham, Burr, and McCain

The *Enhancement of Recruitment, Retention, and Readjustment Through Education Act* would improve education benefits for servicemembers, veterans, and members of the Guard and Reserve, to help with successful recruitment, to encourage continued service in the military, to help more military personnel attend college debt-free, and to help career military personnel provide for the education of their spouses or children.

Findings

- ✘ The findings underscore the importance of education benefits, particularly the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB), in achieving not only successful readjustment to civilian life, but also recruiting and retention within the All Volunteer Force for servicemembers and their families.

Immediately increase education benefits

- ✘ Effective October 2008, increase from \$1,100 to \$1,500 per month the education benefits provided by the Montgomery GI Bill. This amount would cover the average cost of a 4-year public college, including room, board, tuition, and fees.
- ✘ Gradually increase benefits to \$2,000 per month by 2011 for members who serve on active duty for 12 years or more.
- ✘ Provide \$500 per year for books and supplies.
- ✘ Effective October 2008, increase from \$880 to \$1,200 per month the education benefits for Guard and Reserve members called to active duty since September 11, 2001.
- ✘ For those members of the Guard and Reserves who serve in the Selected Reserve for 12 years or more and who continue serving in the Selected Reserve, gradually increase benefits to \$1,600 per month by 2011.
- ✘ Effective October 2008, double from \$317 to \$634 the education benefits for other members of the Guard and Reserves.

Allow more servicemembers to transfer education benefits to dependents

- ✘ Provide broad authority to regular components and Guard and Reserves to allow members to transfer their education benefits to their spouses or children.
- ✘ After serving for at least 6 years, a member could transfer up to half (18 months) of their education benefits to a spouse, children, or both.
- ✘ After serving for 12 years or more, a member could transfer all of their education benefits (36 months) to a spouse, children, or both. This could provide up to \$72,000 towards a dependent's education.

Allow more servicemembers to access VA education benefits

- ✘ Allow service academy graduates and Senior Reserve Officers' Training Corps participants, who currently have no GI Bill benefit, to access benefits, including transferability, under the MGIB. They would be required to complete their initial period of obligated service and then continue to serve for 5 additional years on active duty to become eligible.

- ✘ Allow certain career servicemembers who enlisted between 1977 – 1985 and who were offered only the inferior Post-Vietnam Era Educational Assistance Program (VEAP), who were on active duty after 9/11/01 and who retired since then or are currently serving, the opportunity to access Montgomery GI Bill education benefits by contributing \$2,700. This would be for bachelor's degree only and be non-transferable.

Allow use of education benefits to repay school loans

- ✘ Allow active-duty servicemembers to use up to \$6,000 per year of MGIB benefits to repay federal student loans.

Create matching program (College Patriots Grant Program) to help more veterans

graduate debt-free

- ✘ If a college agrees to provide supplemental financial assistance to help veterans attend debt-free, VA would contribute up to \$3,000 per year (in addition to other VA education benefits) to help meet a veteran's unmet education costs. The combined assistance from VA and the school (which could far exceed VA's contribution) could allow veterans to attend any institution debt-free.

Sense of the Congress and Report

- ✘ Express the sense of the Congress that those who join the All Volunteer Force aspiring to obtain a bachelor's degree and are willing to serve a career in the military should be afforded the means and assistance to obtain a bachelor's degree during the course of their military career.
- ✘ Require the Department of Defense to submit a report to Congress on how to accomplish the goal of guiding servicemembers who are motivated to achieve military careers and a bachelor's degree.