



IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN VETERANS OF AMERICA

A New GI Bill

Rewarding our Troops, Rebuilding our Military

January 2008

- **Known as the “Servicemen’s Readjustment Act,” the World War II GI Bill made higher education affordable for eight million veterans.**
 - The original GI Bill, which expired in 1956, covered tuition, fees, and books, and gave veterans a living stipend while they were at school.
 - Presidents Gerald Ford and George H.W. Bush, Senators Bob Dole and Patrick Moynihan, and authors Norman Mailer and Frank McCourt all used the GI Bill.¹
 - The GI Bill helped reinvent America after a half-decade of war; a 1988 Congressional study found that every dollar spent on educational benefits under the original GI Bill added seven dollars to the national economy in terms of productivity, consumer spending and tax revenue.²

- **The current educational benefits offered to veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan are much lower than the original GI Bill.**
 - Today, after contributing a nonrefundable contribution from their first military paychecks, troops can receive a total of about \$39,600 towards their education.³
 - Unfortunately, this covers only 60-70% of the average cost of four years at a public college or university, or less than two years at a typical private college.⁴
 - National Guardsmen and Reservists, including those who have served multiple combat tours, only receive a fraction of the benefits offered to active-duty service members.⁵
 - There are also considerable delays in receiving benefits; more than 118,000 VA education claims are waiting to be processed.⁶
 - Although 95% of veterans pay a nonrefundable \$1,200 contribution, only 8% of veterans use their whole benefit and 30% of veterans don’t use their GI Bill at all.⁷ These veterans have contributed \$230 million to the national treasury, but received nothing in return.⁸
 - About 300,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have used some part of their GI Bill.⁹

- **Rather than continuing to lower recruitment standards and spend billions in bonuses, a renewed GI Bill is the practical answer to the military's troop shortage and would encourage high-aptitude young people to join the military.**
 - The GI Bill is the military's single most effective recruitment tool; the number one reason civilians join the military is to get money for college.¹⁰
 - We spend \$4 billion a year on recruiting, but even with this investment, there have been serious problems getting enough high-caliber enlistees.¹¹
 - Defense Secretary Gates has recommended "a total increase in the two services of 92,000 soldiers and Marines over the next five years -- 65,000 soldiers and 27,000 Marines."¹² This planned expansion will raise annual recruitment goals by 13 percent.¹³

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¹Edward Humes, "Nine Words," *The Huffington Post*, October 30, 2006: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/edward-humes/nine-words_b_32838.html.

² Edward Humes, "When Dreams Come True," *Orange County Register*, November 5, 2006: http://www.ocregister.com/ocregister/homepage/abox/article_1345180.php.

³ See the VA website for complete details: <http://www.gibill.va.gov/>.

⁴ Elizabeth Farrell, "GI Blues," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 13, 2005.

⁵ Elizabeth Farrell, "GI Blues," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 13, 2005.

⁶ Allison Young, "Delays plague vets' GI Bill benefits," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 15, 2006.

⁷ Elizabeth Farrell, "GI Blues," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 13, 2005.

⁸ Data from Department of Veterans Affairs Education Services Division.

⁹ "VA Benefit Activity, Veterans Deployed to the Global War on Terrorism, June 2007 Update," prepared by VBA Office of Performance Analysis and Integrity, June 25, 2007, p. 8: http://www.veteransforcommonsense.org/files/VFCS/VBA_GWOT_Claims_June_2007.pdf. Currently, about 500,000 veterans of all generations are using the VA's various educational benefits. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "2008 Budget, Congressional Submission," February 6, 2007, p. 1-17: <http://www.va.gov/budget/summary/VolumeIVSummaryVolume.pdf>.

¹⁰ Elizabeth Farrell, "GI Blues," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 13, 2005.

¹¹ See the IAVA report "A Broken Military: Iraq War Threatens Readiness" or "Military Readiness" Quick Facts.

¹² "Defense Department gives details of troop increase," *CNN*, 11 January 2007: <http://www.cnn.com/2007/POLITICS/01/11/iraq.plan/index.html>.



¹³ In 2006, median earnings for a college graduate were \$55,446, compared with \$31,715 for a high-school graduate. Bruce H. Webster, Jr. and Alemayehu Bushaw, U.S. Census Bureau, “Income, earnings, and poverty data from the 2006, American Community Survey,” American Community Survey Reports, ACS-08, August 2007, p. 16: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2007pubs/acs-08.pdf>.