



Partnership for Veterans' Education

March 17, 2008

The Honorable Daniel Akaka
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Akaka:

The Partnership for Veterans' Education, a unique consortium of military, veterans and higher education associations, urges your support for S.22 (amended), a bi-partisan bill sponsored by Senator Jim Webb (D-VA) and over 50 bi-partisan cosponsors that would create a new GI Bill for the 21st century.

We are very grateful for passage of our top priority last year, the establishment of readjustment benefits for "operational reservists" under the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) as contained in the FY 2008 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), P.L. 110-181. This was a dramatic step towards equity for the hundreds of thousands of Guard and Reserve service men and women called to defend our nation on active duty.

The current MGIB, however, falls far short of the cost of education. According to a January report (RL33281) from the Congressional Research Service, the MGIB covers only about 73% of the national average cost of a four-year public college / university education and just 31% of the cost of the average independent college / university. S. 22 allows a veteran to enroll as a full-time student and to focus solely on education--as it funds tuition at an amount equal to the highest in-state tuition rate charged by a public college in a state, as well as providing stipends for housing and for books and other educational costs.

Our second priority is to fairly compensate Guard and Reserve servicemembers who serve multiple active duty tours. Currently, education benefits are based on a reservist's longest single activation; consequently, many reservists are being penalized for serving multiple shorter tours. Reservists who serve 36 months of aggregate active duty should be entitled to the full MGIB, not the 80% benefit established in the FY 2008 NDAA. S.22 allows Guard and Reserve troops to accrue their multiple tours towards GI Bill entitlement, creating an incentive for further service.

S.22 (amended) is a new GI Bill for a new century and the new realities of service in the war on terror. It addresses our top priorities and makes other important upgrades to the GI Bill including an opportunity for private institutions to partner with the government to support enrollment in programs that are beyond the reach of most veterans.

The Partnership for Veterans' Education thanks you for your commitment to the "new greatest generation" of American heroes who demonstrate remarkable dedication and enormous sacrifice in this long and difficult war. The nation should be proud to re-invest in their futures and the future of this great nation. We invite you to become a cosponsor of S.22 (amended) and do all you can to ensure its enactment this year.

Sincerely,

The Partnership for Veterans' Education
(signatures enclosed)

Air Force Association
Air Force Sergeants Association
Air Force Women Officers Associated
American Logistics Association
AMVETS (American Veterans)
Army Aviation Association of America
Association of Military Surgeons of the United States
Association of the United States Army
Chief Warrant Officer and Warrant Officer Association, U.S. Coast Guard
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc.
Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States
Fleet Reserve Association
Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.
Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America
Marine Corps League
Marine Corps Reserve Association
Military Chaplains Association of the United States of America
Military Officers Association of America
Military Order of the Purple Heart
National Association for Uniformed Services
National Military Family Association
National Order of Battlefield Commissions
Naval Enlisted Reserve Association
Naval Reserve Association
Non Commissioned Officers Association
Reserve Enlisted Association of the United States
Reserve Officers Association
The Retired Enlisted Association
United States Army Warrant Officers Association
United States Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers Association
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States
Veterans' Widows International Network