

Citizens Owe Our Soldiers a New G.I. Bill

I have a novel in editing, a story of a college administration in the aftermath of the murder of a U.S. Army recruiting officer. I chose as my venue a privately supported engineering school, historically friendly to the military that had relied on receiving a considerable amount of tuition revenues through ROTC and the G.I Bill. My fictional school is in trouble: its image has been compromised by the murder, and the military benefits can't cover the full freight anymore.

In researching my story, I had to understand military recruiting as well as the G.I Bill. I found myself surprised that the college education benefits under the G.I Bill today are not as expansive as they were after World War II. World War II veterans received full tuition, fees, books, a monthly stipend and reimbursements for training expenses. The original legislation signed by President Roosevelt enabled 7.8 million World War II veterans to go to college, more than half of those who served. It also invigorated the growth of higher education in our country.

Since the original legislation passed in 1944, there have been subsequent G.I Bills, however, according the Senator James Webb (D-Virginia) their benefits were more appropriate to a military in peacetime, not an armed forces at war. I agree, because a better benefits package will only help to recruit and retain a strong military. It will be a much easier sell for the recruiters too.

Webb, an ex-Marine and former Secretary of the Navy under the first President Bush, is the primary sponsor of the Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act to increase educational benefits to all members of the military who have served on active duty since 9/11. Webb, a former Republican who served under President Reagan as well as the first President Bush, is a beneficiary of the G.I Bill and a more than credible leader on this issue.

Webb's proposed legislation will enable eligible veterans to receive 100 percent of the tuition and fees charged by the most expensive state university in their home state. While this is not a total return to the intentions of the original post-World War II G.I Bill, it is an extremely reasonable start, and an appropriate reward to those who have served with honor. Yet, the Bush Administration opposes the bill, even though the current president's father was himself a beneficiary of the original G.I Bill. They, along with the Defense Department, believe that it will hinder military recruitment and retention, though the bill is meant to do the opposite.

Democratic presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama support Webb's bill. Senator John McCain, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, is not a co-sponsor, although he has announced plans to introduce his own legislation.

The major obstacle to a new GI Bill is cost and the addition a new entitlement raises the federal budget deficit at wartime. However, I'd like to offer one suggestion that may make a new GI Bill more palatable: prioritize recipients by time at combat. Those who have been stop-lossed would receive priority, followed by those who have been deployed into a combat zone at least once. It's only fair that the soldiers who have taken the greatest risk receive the greatest rewards.

I hope there will be a final piece of legislation that will pass with a bi-partisan, veto-proof majority—and you should too. It's only right that we help those who risked their lives on the way to getting their postwar lives started on the road from soldier to citizen.

About the Author

Contact Stuart Nachbar at [Educated Quest](#), a blog on education politics, policy and technology or read about his first book, The Sex Ed Chronicle, a novel on education and politics in 1980 New Jersey, at [Sex Ed Chronicles](#).

Source: www.isnare.com

Source: <http://articles.exospy.com>