

STATEMENT OF RECORD

NATIONAL GUARD ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES

House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity Legislative Hearing on Pending Legislation

June 12, 2024

Chairman Bost, Ranking Member Takano, and distinguished members of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, on behalf of the almost 45,000 members of the National Guard Association of the United States and the nearly 450,000 Soldiers and Airmen of the National Guard, we appreciate this opportunity to submit a statement for record. We are deeply grateful for the work of this committee and your staff members. Your tireless dedication toward improving the lives of veterans has led to substantial policy change with lasting impact. We stand together with you all to defend those who protect and defend our nation. Specifically, we would like to highlight three bills that improve servicemembers education benefits.

H.R. 7543, The GRAD Act

As we celebrate the 80th anniversary of the GI Bill this year, we reflect on the incredible impact it has made on generations of servicemembers. When a servicemember steps up to enlist in the military, they commit to the security of our nation. In return, we commit to their future by providing education benefits. What better way to honor the spirit of this monumental policy than by extending it to cover all military service for the Guard and Reserve. While members of the Reserve Component maintain the same level of daily preparedness as the Active Component, they do not receive the same benefits for the same service. This inequity must be corrected.

We ask for full consideration and support of **H.R. 7543, the Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act** (GRAD Act). We have been working on this effort for several congresses with your committee and this year's language is the ideal approach, covering all title 32 service. As

negotiations continue, we express the importance to cover all Annual Training (AT) and Inactive Duty Training (IDT). A day in uniform is a day in service to this country and should count toward education benefits.

H.R. 8607

Inflation has caused costs to skyrocket across all markets and books and supplies for college have been no different. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, between 2006 and 2016 college textbook prices increased by 88 percent. The stipend of \$1000 no longer covers the yearly expenses that it once did. Raising this stipend and linking it to the Consumer Price Index is the right move and ensures equitable reimbursements well into the future. We fully support this effort to modernize this benefit and bring it into the 21st century.

H.R. 8627, Student Veteran Debt Relief Act of 2024

Lastly, we support this effort to put limitations on establishing a statute of limitations for the Department of Veterans Affairs to recoup any overpayments that have been made. We believe a ten year window is more than adequate for the government to acknowledge any payment errors. Often, the individual has no idea the overpayment was even made. Servicemembers should not have to live in fear of whether or not the government is someday going to come to them for a repayment. This is a common sense correction that protects veterans.

Conclusion:

I thank you again for taking up these critical issues and for allowing NGAUS to submit this statement. These efforts will provide even more servicemembers with much needed benefits and breakdown barriers to education. These policies truly make a difference in the lives of our Guardsmen and their families. I look forward to continuing our work together and sincerely appreciate the steadfast leadership from the members and their staffers in advocating for the National Guard.