

The Veterans Education Project

Statement For the Record

**United States House
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity**

On

Proposed Legislation

March 10, 2025

Veterans Education Project
<https://veteranseducationproject.org/>

The Veterans Education Project (VEP) is a nonprofit Veteran Service Organization that aims to highlight innovation within higher education and to support veteran and military students. The Veterans Education Project is committed to nonpartisan research, engagement, and policy implementation in our efforts to support institutions that meet the needs of student veterans, and guarantee the benefits and support systems necessary for veteran and military students to succeed.

Headquartered in Washington D.C., VEP originated from the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States (EANGUS) before branching off in 2021. Since, VEP has partnered with institutions to form pilot programs for accelerated degree pathways for members of Special Operations Forces, while supporting important and necessary legislation for the veteran community, postsecondary accountability, and innovative postsecondary programming that accelerates the socioeconomic advancement of veteran and military students.

The Veterans Education Project was founded by Daniel Elkins, a veteran of the 19th Special Forces Group, and continues to advocate for veteran and military students under the leadership of its new Executive Director, Donald Franklin.

President – Daniel Elkins
Executive Director – Donald Franklin

**STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
119TH CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION**

MARCH 10, 2025

Chairman Van Orden, Ranking Member Pappas, and Members of the Subcommittee:

We are grateful for the opportunity to provide a statement for the record to be considered during this hearing, which includes many notable bills addressing topics in higher education and veterans' education benefits. The Veterans Education Project's mission is to advocate for veterans, service members, and their families to receive fair and equitable access to education benefits and high-quality postsecondary programs that uplift their socioeconomic standing and provide pathways to rewarding, purpose-driven lives.

In this statement, we address the following legislative proposals: the *Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act of 2025*; the *Modernizing the Veterans On-Campus Experience Act of 2025*; the *Veterans Education and Technical Skills (VETS) Opportunity Act of 2025*; the *Reforming Education for Veterans Act*; the *Veterans Readiness & Employment Transparency Act*; and *H.R. 1872*.

We applaud the Committee's commitment to the educational needs of our Nation's veterans and servicemembers, and look forward to working on the advancement of these important issues to best serve those who have served us.

H.R. 1423, the Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act of 2025

To amend title 38, United States Code, to expand eligibility for Post-9/11 Educational Assistance to members of the National Guard who perform certain full-time duty, and for other purposes.

The GI Bill Parity Act would expand Post-9/11 GI Bill eligibility to include National Guard and Reserve members by ensuring all qualifying service under Titles 10, 14, and 32 counts toward earning benefits. This bill corrects a longstanding inequity that has left many Guard members ineligible for these benefits despite serving in the same capacities as their Active Duty counterparts. Importantly, it also applies retroactively to service performed since September 11, 2001, and takes effect one year after enactment.

For too long, National Guard members have been disadvantaged by outdated policies that fail to recognize their service. Under current law, Guard and Reserve members must serve at least 90 cumulative or 30 continuous days on active duty to qualify for benefits, while their required training and operational duties, totaling at least 39 days per fiscal year, do not contribute to eligibility. This bill ensures that every day in uniform counts, recognizing the vital role Guard and Reserve members play in national defense, disaster response, and homeland security.

The Veterans Education Project (VEP) strongly supports this legislation and commends the Committee for working to correct this disparity. We especially appreciate the leadership of Representative Levin in championing this effort since the 116th Congress. We support this legislation and look forward to seeing it advance.

H.R. 980, the Modernizing the Veterans On-Campus Experience Act of 2025

To amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements to the provision of on-campus educational and vocational counseling by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

The Modernizing the Veterans On-Campus Experience Act of 2025 enhances the Department of Veterans Affairs' VetSuccess on Campus (VSOC) program by improving access to on-campus educational and vocational counseling for student veterans. This bill adjusts counselor qualifications, ensures manageable caseloads of no more than 25 veterans per counselor, and most importantly, allows counselors to serve multiple campuses. These provisions maximize the reach of VSOC counselors and improve the efficiency of VA resources.

By allowing VSOC counselors to serve multiple campuses, this bill directly addresses the challenge of limited counselor availability at institutions of higher education that seek to best serve their veteran population. Many student veterans currently struggle to access support due to resource constraints at their schools. The increased flexibility in counselor assignments ensures that more veterans, regardless of their location, receive the guidance they need to succeed in higher education and career planning.

The Veterans Education Project (VEP) supports this legislation as a practical and necessary improvement to the VSOC program. We commend Representative Van Orden for his leadership on pushing for more efficient VA programs.

H.R. 1458, the Veterans Education and Technical Skills (VETS) Opportunity Act of 2025

To amend title 38, United States Code, to modify the criteria for approval of certain independent study programs for purposes of the educational assistance programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Veterans Education and Technical Skills (VETS) Opportunity Act of 2025 expands Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to include partially online programs such as hybrid skilled trade educational programs. This legislation modernizes veterans' education benefits to reflect the evolving landscape of workforce development and educational innovation. By allowing hybrid skilled trade programs to qualify for GI Bill funding, this bill ensures that veterans can access high-quality education and career opportunities that align with their needs as non-traditional students.

This reform is especially important for veterans who are balancing multiple obligations such as work and family responsibilities, and therefore cannot attend a full-time, four-year, in-person program that caters to the traditional student demographic. Limiting veterans' educational opportunities can deter veterans and servicemembers from pursuing the training that will propel them into the civilian workforce after a military career. Hybrid learning models provide the flexibility necessary for veterans to upskill and transition into high-demand industries while accommodating their unique circumstances.

The Veterans Education Project (VEP) supports this common-sense legislation, as well as further programmatic expansions of the Post-9/11 GI Bill that meet the needs of student veterans where they are. Furthermore, it removes unnecessary restrictions on schools that are adapting to better serve the veteran community. We commend Representative Ciscomani for his leadership on this issue and look forward to working with staff to ensure its passage.

H.R. 1527, the Reforming Education for Veterans Act

To amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements to the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs relating the educational assistance, and for other purposes.

The Reforming Education for Veterans Act improves educational flexibility for servicemembers, particularly National Guard members, who are enrolled in higher education. This legislation ensures that those who receive orders during a semester will not lose their educational progress if at least 50% of the course has been completed.

This bill provides essential protections for student servicemembers by allowing them to enter into agreements with their institutions to complete courses at a later date, take a leave of absence, or withdraw and receive a grade for their completed course work. This flexibility is critical for National Guard members, who are often called to duty unexpectedly and face disruptions in their education.

Additionally, the bill streamlines compliance requirements for institutions of higher education managing VA education benefits by allowing schools with multiple campuses to complete a single compliance survey, provided that one School Certifying Official oversees veteran enrollment for all campuses. This reduces administrative burdens on institutions while maintaining oversight of veterans' education benefits.

The Veterans Education Project (VEP) supports this legislation as a necessary step in reducing bureaucratic obstacles for Veterans pursuing higher education in parallel to their service as well as the institutions of higher learning that cater to them. We thank Representative John James for his leadership on this issue and look forward to seeing it advance.

H.R. 1793, the Veterans Readiness & Employment Transparency Act

To amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for outreach requirements for Department of Veterans Affairs training and rehabilitation programs for veterans with service-connected disabilities, and for other purposes.

The Veterans Readiness & Employment (VR&E) Transparency Act addresses longstanding challenges veterans face in accessing the VR&E program, including excessive wait times, lack of communication from counselors, and bureaucratic hurdles. This legislation enhances transparency, accessibility, and efficiency within the VR&E program to ensure veterans with service-connected disabilities receive the support they have earned.

By requiring each regional office to display contact information for VR&E inquiries, establishing a dedicated VR&E hotline, and mandating regular Q&A sessions between regional offices and educational institutions, this bill improves communication between veterans, schools, and the VA. Additionally, it strengthens oversight of the benefit extension waiver process by mandating annual reports and requiring extension requests to be processed within 30 days. These provisions will help reduce the significant delays veterans currently face, which range from two weeks to over 150 days.

The Veterans Education Project (VEP) strongly supports this legislation. VR&E programs are a vital resource for veterans seeking job training, education, and employment accommodations, so improving access to these benefits is essential. Greater transparency and accountability will reduce wait times, ensure veterans receive timely support, and provide recourse if they do not. We congratulate

Representative Hamadeh on introducing this issue and look forward to working with staff to ensure its passage.

H.R. 913, the Streamlining Aviation for Eligible Veterans Act of 2025

To amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to approve a rehabilitation program for certain veterans with service-connected disabilities that include the pursuit of non-degree flight training programs, and for other purposes.

The Streamlining Aviation for Eligible Veterans Act of 2025 expands vocational rehabilitation opportunities for veterans by allowing non-degree flight training programs to qualify for funding under the Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) program. Currently, VR&E funding is restricted to flight training programs tied to traditional four-year degree institutions, despite the fact that most major airlines no longer require a college degree to enter the profession.

This bill modernizes the eligibility requirements for vocational flight training, allowing veterans with service-connected disabilities to complete their training directly through accredited flight schools. By removing unnecessary barriers, this legislation provides greater flexibility for veterans pursuing careers as commercial pilots while also helping to address the ongoing U.S. airline pilot shortage.

The Veterans Education Project (VEP) supports this legislation, as it empowers veterans to take a faster and more cost-effective path to a well-paying civilian career in an industry that urgently needs trained professionals. We commend Representative Obernolte for recognizing this commonsense solution and look forward to its passage and implementation.

H.R. 1872

To amend title 38, United States Code, to ensure that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs repays members of the Armed Forces for certain contributions made by such members towards Post-9/11 Educational Assistance.

H.R. 1872 ensures that veterans receive their GI Bill benefit payments and housing stipends on time. Delays in payments from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) cause financial hardships for veterans, including late tuition and housing payments, jeopardizing their education and housing stability. These delays are also cause for concern among educational institutions and housing suppliers.

This bill mitigates these risks by requiring the VA to ensure the timely disbursement of GI Bill benefits. By addressing past inefficiencies in the payment system, the legislation helps prevent undue financial strain on veterans and reinforces trust in the GI Bill program among schools and housing providers.

The Veterans Education Project (VEP) supports this legislation as a crucial measure to protect veterans from financial instability caused by administrative delays. Ensuring that veterans receive their earned benefits on time is essential to their success in higher education and beyond. We thank Representative Jackson for addressing this overlooked issue and look forward to working with staff to ensure its passage

Ending Statement

The Veterans Education Project thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide statements on the legislation before you. We look forward to working with you to ensure that veterans pursuing higher education are best served by your efforts.

Donald Franklin
Executive Director
Veterans Education Project