



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF VETERANS'
PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS**

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Committee on Veterans' Affairs

Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

Hearing: *A Continued Review of GI Bill Payment Delays*

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NAVPA Written Testimony

Submitted by:

President Keith A. Glindemann

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The National Association of Veterans' Program Administrators (NAVPA) is an organization of institutions and individuals who are involved or interested in the operation of veterans' affairs programs and/or the delivery of services to veterans as Veterans' Education Program Administrators across the country. A Board of Directors elected at our annual conference governs NAVPA. The purpose of NAVPA is to promote professional competency and efficiency through an association of members and others allied with, and involved in, veterans' educational programs and to promote the development, improvement and extension of opportunities to any service member, veteran or dependent of a veteran, for his or her personal growth and development to its fullest potential. This is achieved through assisting with the assessment and attainment of individual needs, communicating and cooperating with communities, schools, agencies and organizations at the local, state, regional and federal levels; developing productive relations with the Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Education, Department of Defense, and other federal or national Veterans Service Organization or agency serving veterans; participating in efforts to facilitate the education and/or training of educationally or otherwise disadvantaged veterans and to promote cooperative studies, research, evaluation, workshops, seminars, conferences, and other activities as may be desired or required to fulfill the purpose of NAVPA.

MEMBERSHIP

NAVPA has served as the voice of advocacy for veterans in higher education since its founding in 1975. Our research, training, and policy initiatives have developed programs and support services to ensure veterans achieve their academic and professional goals. NAVPA's membership now includes 356 Institutions of Higher Learning across 46 states to include Washington DC that represents over 431,000 veterans.

For The Hearing Record

Honorable Chairman Arrington and committee members, The National Association of Veteran Program Administrators (NAVPA) wish to have the following written remarks entered into the record for the hearing entitled “*A Continued Review of GI Bill Payment Delays.*”

NAVPA members work on college and university campuses across the country and most serve primarily as School Certifying Officials (SCO’s) who are responsible for certifying VA education benefits to the regional processing centers in Buffalo, NY, Muskogee, OK and St. Louis, MO.

During the fall 2018 semester, our members in each of these regions have experienced significant delays in the processing of GI Bill benefits. VA Central Office has communicated to schools that a series of information technology (IT) glitches created the delays, but have not provided specific guidelines as to when the delays will be resolved.

NAVPA members have reported specific cases during the current fall semester of student veterans being referred to creditors and collection agencies because they were unable to cover housing, utility, transportation, and subsistence expenses. We have also been notified by our membership that student veterans were having to withdraw from the fall semester to return to the workforce to maintain housing and other living expenses.

Our institutions and SCO’s have worked individually with student veterans to assist them in securing grace periods for rent and utility payments. It is a precarious position for school officials to advocate with private creditors on behalf of student veterans, due to “IT glitches” at the VA.

While advocating for our student veterans awaiting payment of their benefits with creditors is precarious for our membership, it is not our greatest concern. NAVPA’s greatest concern is the impact from these delayed payments from the VA on our students. These delayed payments are creating undue stress to student veterans and will thus have a negative influence on their academic success.

There are many unanticipated challenges for student veterans. Transition from active duty to the civilian sector can be precarious to include: new academic routines, which are less structured and more rigorous, can be overwhelming; financial concerns, such as how to pay for college or live independently outside of the military, can negatively impact the student experience; and preparing for increased decision-making responsibilities can be stressful. While a number of factors contribute to student veteran stress; our experience is that the most prominent of these stressors are related to their finances and the timely and accurate delivery of their GI Bill benefit.

Student veterans, who participated in campus surveys across the country, have reported that financial stress related to the GI Bill has had a negative impact on academic performance or progress. This stress is forcing student veterans to juggle working fulltime while attending school. Higher education studies have shown that students working more than 20 hours a week during the academic year has a negative impact on academic progress. Students who work longer hours, leave less time for academic work, leading to decreased academic performance.

Our membership has also reported that the delays in payment this fall has led student veterans to seek less than ideal financial loans to bridge the gap. We have students that have sought out loans from predatory lenders including “payday” outlets. Our concern is that the financial crisis that some of our students have experienced this fall semester, will again impede their ability to succeed in higher education.

Staying in school and graduating is an important goal for student veterans and their families. It is NAVPA’s belief that greater financial burdens due to delayed payments, will lead students to reduce coursework or drop out of school in favor of lower waged employment.

Our membership firmly believes that the current generation of student veterans studying on our campuses have the ability and capacity to change the course of history in our country. We believe that the timely delivery of GI Bill benefits is paramount to our students realizing their academic potential and their success.

The NAVPA Board of Directors and our membership respectfully request that the committee continue to provide oversight, transparency, and accountability where deemed necessary to prevent future delays of GI Bill benefits to our nation’s greatest heroes.