

# HOUSE COMMITTEE ON **VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

REPUBLICANS | RANKING MEMBER MIKE BOST

## **H.R. 290: The GI Bill Transferability Protection Act of 2021**

### **Background:**

The GI Bill has provided millions of servicemembers, veterans, and military families with access to higher education and training since it was created in 1944. The GI Bill grants education benefits, paid for by the Department of Veterans Affairs, to servicemembers and veterans who have served in the Armed Forces for certain lengths of time. Eligible servicemembers may choose to either use their GI Bill benefits themselves or to transfer them to eligible family members. In order to transfer this benefit to an eligible dependent, a servicemember must have served six years on active duty and agree to an additional four-year service obligation. Under current law, if an active-duty servicemember transfers their GI Bill benefits to their spouse or dependent but fails to fulfill this service obligation, the spouse or dependent is responsible for repaying the cost of their tuition, monthly housing payments, and other expenses. This is despite the spouse or dependent having no control over the servicemember's failure to fulfill their duty.

This bill would make it clear that the servicemember, not their spouse or dependent, is responsible for repaying GI Bill expenses incurred as a result of the servicemember's failure to fulfill their service obligation. It would also clarify that the servicemember, is only liable for expenses incurred due to their failure to complete their service obligation.

### **The Message:**

- It is fundamentally unfair for military spouses or dependents to be on the hook for educational expenses they had no say in incurring in the first place.
- If a servicemember transfers their GI Bill benefits to a spouse or child, the servicemember is responsible for earning that benefit through honorable service or should be solely responsible for paying the costs.
- This commonsense legislation would fix a loophole in current law that penalizes military family members who are pursuing higher education through the GI Bill for circumstances outside of their control.