

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

REPUBLICANS | RANKING MEMBER MIKE BOST

H.R. 5151: The Col. James Floyd Turner IV USMC GI Bill Transfer Act

Background:

Since it was created in 1944, the GI Bill has provided millions of servicemembers, veterans, and military families with higher education and training. The Post-9/11 GI Bill, which was established in 2008, allows servicemembers who have served for at least six years and who agree to serve an additional four years to transfer and distribute their GI Bill benefits to their children. However, if the servicemember dies after transferring these benefits but before distributing them, their children are no longer eligible to use them. This technicality in current law came to the forefront in 2018 upon the death of Col. James Floyd Turner IV, a Marine veteran. In a note he left behind for his family after his death, Col. Turner expressed his happiness at being able to leave his GI Bill benefits to his daughter. But, because his death occurred before he had formally distributed his benefits to her, she is unable to use them in accordance with his final wishes.

The Col. James Floyd Turner IV USMC GI Bill Transfer Act would correct this injustice by clarifying that if a veteran dies before distributing their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to their dependents, their dependents are still able to access those benefits as the veteran intended. The bill would require the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to evenly distribute remaining benefits to all eligible transferees who would then be able to distribute them amongst themselves.

The Message:

- Active-duty servicemembers and veterans deserve the peace-of-mind of knowing that, should they die suddenly, their family members will be able to access the benefits they earned in service.
- This commonsense legislation would fix a technicality in current law that puts an unfair burden on grieving military families.