



NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS  
WASHINGTON, DC

The Honorable Mark Takano  
Chairman  
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
420 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jerry Moran  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
521 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Phil Roe, M.D.  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
102 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jon Tester  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
311 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-2604

Dear Chairmen Moran and Takano and Ranking Members Tester and Roe:

As the National President & CEO of Student Veterans of America (SVA), and on behalf of more than 1,500 chapters located at colleges and universities nationwide, I write to express our strong support for H.R. 7105, the *Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020*. SVA supports this bill because it is an extraordinary package of veterans' legislation that addresses some of the most important issues raised by SVA chapter leaders in recent years. Among other things, this bill will expand in-state tuition benefits, delay the decision point for service members when deciding whether to pay into the Montgomery GI Bill, and expand Yellow Ribbon benefits to students studying at overseas schools. The bill passed quickly through the Senate, and we hope to see an equally swift passage by the House of Representatives.

Of the many things this bill does to better protect and serve student veterans, we believe some are particularly noteworthy. It finally removes the arbitrary restriction in federal law that limits student veterans' eligibility for in-state tuition at public institutions. Nearly half of U.S. states and territories have passed legislation eliminating this cap, but that very action has created a confusing patchwork of state laws, which makes it difficult for students to know if they qualify for the benefit.<sup>1</sup> It is long past time that all eligible student veterans have access to the same in-state tuition benefit regardless of when or where they decide to enroll in school.

This bill also delays a service member's decision to opt into the program until six months after entry into initial training, and then provides them with up to 90 days to weigh the costs and benefits of participating in MGIB.<sup>2</sup> The MGIB was a premier veterans education benefit for years. Today, however, the Post-9/11 GI Bill is generally a more generous benefit for most veterans and does not require a buy-in for eligibility. Nevertheless, the MGIB continues to enroll tens of thousands of service members each year, ultimately costing them 12 months of reduced pay. Most service members never use the benefit, and to add insult to injury, many never receive refunds for what they pay in. This has transformed MGIB into a tax on our troops.

Troops continue to participate in the MGIB largely because they are forced to decide whether to opt-out within just the first few days of beginning their service. SVA strongly believes that, given the appropriate time and information, most service members will easily conclude that the Post-9/11 GI Bill is the better benefit.

<sup>1</sup> See *generally* Hearing on Pending Legislation, before the Subcomm. on Economic Opportunity of the H. Veterans Affairs Comm., 116th Cong. 2-4 (July 17, 2019) (statement of William Hubbard, Chief of Staff, Student Veterans of America).

<sup>2</sup> See *generally* Hearing on Pending Legislation, before the Subcomm. on Economic Opportunity of the H. Veterans Affairs Comm., 116th Cong. 2-4 (July 17, 2019) (statement of William Hubbard, Chief of Staff, Student Veterans of America).



In addition, the bill addresses many technical issues within existing programs that were preventing them from operating as intended. For one, it expands eligibility for the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship, irons out several wrinkles in the process, and provides access to the Yellow Ribbon program for international schools. Both fixes are direct requests from student veterans and SVA thanks the Committees for their commitment to address the issues.

Finally, this bill also includes several common-sense oversight protections for VA education programs. This includes authorizing new risk-based surveys through State Approving Agencies, codifying the Principles of Excellence from Executive Order 13607, further restricting fraudulent and misleading advertising and marketing practices by bad actor schools, providing for the restoration of benefits when schools close to certain student veterans, and continuing to monitor for-profits that convert to non-profits to ensure that the conversion was not simply a vehicle to side-step existing regulations.

By ensuring the passage of this bill, what has been an extremely difficult year for everyone will, at the very least, end with an uplifting sign of progress for our nation's veterans. SVA applauds you for your leadership on these issues and for championing this important legislation. Please feel free to contact our Policy Associate Justin Monk directly if you should have any questions on this matter. He can be reached by phone at 202-223-4710 or by email at [justin.monk@studentveterans.org](mailto:justin.monk@studentveterans.org).

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jared S. Lyon", is written over a faint, circular watermark or stamp.

Jared S. Lyon, MPA  
National President & CEO

