

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

REPUBLICANS | RANKING MEMBER MIKE BOST

The Student Veterans Counseling Centers Eligibility Act

Background:

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers a number of programs to help veterans and certain dependents and survivors achieve their educational goals. In 2021, more than 850 thousand veterans and beneficiaries were enrolled in a VA education program. The two most well-known VA education programs are the Post-9/11 and Montgomery G.I. Bills, which covers the cost of tuition and room and board for eligible veterans and others pursuing two or four year degrees. School can be stressful for any student but may be particularly stressful for veterans who are older, non-traditional students and who may be enrolling in school during or immediately following their separation from military service.

VA Readjustment Counseling Centers – which are more commonly called Vet Centers – provide individual, group, marriage, and family counseling and peer support opportunities for active duty servicemembers, veterans, members of the National Guard and Reserve, and certain military family members. Vet Centers are community-based, not co-located with VA medical center campuses, and Vet Center services are confidential and free.

The *Veterans Counseling Centers Eligibility Act* would expand Vet Center eligibility to student veterans who are using a VA education program. This would ensure that counseling and support is available to student veterans who may be struggling on campus or with their transition out of the military, which is known to be a vulnerable time.

The Message:

- Helping veterans succeed in school and in their civilian lives is one of most important ways to thank them for their service.
- Leaving the military and going back to school can be a particularly stressful and difficult time for separating servicemembers and veterans.
- The *Veterans Counseling Centers Eligibility Act* would provide additional support to student veterans by allowing them to seek counseling and community at VA Vet Centers.