

Altmire Votes to Strengthen G.I. Bill for Veterans

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Under the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act (Post-9/11 G.I. Bill - H.R. 5740), Pennsylvanians who have completed more than three months of active duty service since September 11, 2001 would qualify for a maximum educational benefit of \$23,846 a year, which includes \$12,164 for tuition, \$1,000 for books and \$1,186 per month for living expenses. Congressman Altmire was an original co-sponsor of the bill, which passed the House today by a vote of 256-166 as part of the FY 2009 Emergency Supplemental Bill.

This is a dramatic increase over the current G.I. Bill's maximum education benefit of \$9,990 a year. In 2007, 12,389 Pennsylvania veterans used the G.I. Bill to pursue higher education.

“After World War II, the G.I. Bill helped millions of veterans go to college who otherwise could not have afforded it,” Altmire said. “Over the past 60 years, however, the real value of the G.I. Bill's benefits has been eroded as the cost of college has skyrocketed. By revamping the G.I. bill so it can cover the cost of college today, Congress is restoring the original promise of this bill for a new generation of veterans. Nothing is more important than showing our veterans that we are committed to honoring their service by helping them pursue new opportunities when they return home.”

The Post-9/11 G.I. Bill provides veterans with a maximum education benefit equal to the cost of in-state tuition at the most expensive public university and the cost of living for their area. Reservists and National Guard members would qualify for full educational benefits after serving three years and would receive a pro-rated portion of the benefits before that.

For veterans who choose to attend a more expensive, private university, the bill creates a program through which the government would match, dollar-for-dollar, any supplemental financial assistance given to veterans by their schools. Veterans would also have up to 15 years, rather than the 10 years currently allowed, in which to use their educational assistance. This will ensure men and women serving multiple deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan do not run out of time to

use the bill's benefits.

Approximately 7.8 million veterans used the G.I. bill after World War II. For every dollar invested in veterans' education, seven dollars were generated for America's economy. Three former presidents, a dozen U.S. Senators, three Supreme Court justices, and fourteen Nobel Prize winners went to school through the G.I. Bill.