



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
VETERANS' AFFAIRS
Chairman Phil Roe, M.D.

Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017

Background:

As higher education continues to evolve, the ways students are learning and the courses they are pursuing in modern-day society differs from even a decade ago. Although the GI Bill has been enhanced since its enactment in 1944, there are still many types of training and education programs that are still not accessible to student veterans through the GI Bill. Furthermore, [recent data](#) has shown that student veterans are succeeding at a higher rate than their non-veteran peers, and it is in the country's best interest to continue to invest in these veterans and servicemembers.

The Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017, named for the [principal architect](#) of the original GI Bill, would improve and extend GI Bill benefits granted to veterans, their surviving spouses and dependents. This bipartisan, bicameral package is budget neutral and includes provisions that have been proposed and prioritized by Veterans Service Organizations.

This bill would remove time restrictions to use the GI Bill, enabling future eligible recipients to use their GI bill benefits for their entire lives, as opposed to the current 15-year timeline. It would also simplify the benefit for future servicemembers by consolidating the GI Bill into a single program over time, which would reduce VA's administrative costs.

The legislation provides significant increases in GI Bill funding for Reservists and Guardsmen, dependents, surviving spouses and surviving dependents. It also provides 100% GI Bill eligibility to Post 9/11 Purple Heart recipients. In addition, this bill restores eligibility for servicemembers whose school closes in the middle of a semester and creates a pilot program that would pay for veterans to take certain high technology courses.

The Message:

- Since 1944, the GI Bill has provided veterans the opportunity to invest in themselves and their futures through access to education benefits.
- Expanding veterans' access to education and workforce training will help ease their transition from active duty to civilian life.
- This bill would improve and extend the education benefits granted to veterans, their surviving spouses and dependents through the GI Bill.
- For the first time in the history of the GI Bill, new servicemembers will be able to use the benefit throughout their lifetimes.