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PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 111<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2010

## *House of Representatives*

# PROVIDING EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE TO OUR VETERANS!

**HON. BOB FILNER**

OF CALIFORNIA  
IN THE HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES

I want to thank Senator Akaka, chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, for introducing this bill, S. 3447, also known as the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act of 2010. And I want to thank my colleague, Representative Walt Minnick of Idaho, for his advocacy on behalf of our Nation's veterans and for introducing a similar bill in the House of Representatives.

My colleagues may recall that we successfully passed the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 to help pay the full cost of tuition at 4-year colleges for veterans who served after September 11, 2001. This new entitlement has provided thousands of veterans with funds to pay for tuition and fees, a monthly housing allowance, and a \$1,000 book stipend. While this has proven to be a signifi-

cant step to improve existing educational benefits for our veterans, much work remains to be done.

This bill is fully paid for, bipartisan, and seeks to rectify many of the ongoing technical concerns that were highlighted after the passage of the Post-9/11 GI bill while expanding benefits to veterans that were originally excluded from participating in this new benefit.

Current law prohibits certain individuals in the Reserve and National Guard from obtaining veterans education benefits under the Post-9/11 bill. This legislation seeks to address this inequity by allowing qualified individuals in our Reserve and National Guard to receive benefits under the Post-9/11 GI bill. The legislation would also provide veterans with a housing stipend while taking courses strictly

through long distance learning, a key issue which many of us have spoken on. In addition to expanding the housing stipend, student veterans will also have the ability to use their educational benefits to pay for national tests, licensure, and certification tests.

Furthermore, this bill would address a major shortfall expressed by the veterans' community for those who would prefer to attend a non-college degree program that would meet their professional goals. This bill seeks to expand on the eligible programs of education to include apprenticeship and on-the-job training, in addition to flight training and non-college degree programs of education.

Finally, this bill seeks to recognize the family's role of caring for an injured veteran by extending the period that a family member can use his or her

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education benefits. Providing more time for a caregiver to pursue their educational goals is the least we can do for those who have taken on the responsibility to care for an injured loved one.

I would like to thank our Speaker, Ms. Pelosi, for her leadership and dedication to America's veterans. It is only fitting to note that enhancing veterans education benefits was a major focus when Democrats took control of the House 4 years ago and remains a priority here in the final hours of the 111th Congress. Certainly, we look forward to continuing this advocacy in the next Congress.