

***Servicemembers  
Deserve Better  
Education Benefits***

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The men and women who have served our country, in times of peace and war, deserve fair and just compensation for all they have sacrificed for America. As a Member of the House Armed Services Committee, I am working to ensure our servicemembers have access to the best benefits available. That is why I have proposed the Expanding Education for Military Families Act.

The Expanding Education for Military Families Act has two parts. First, it would allow active-duty service members with six or more years of service to transfer their Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) benefits to a spouse or child after agreeing to sign up for an additional four years. Secondly, it would give active and reserve servicemembers more time to make a decision about whether or not to sign-up for MGIB benefits upon enlistment. These changes will help us recruit and retain top-quality servicemen and servicewomen.

On the portability front, the MGIB currently contains a portability provision only for those with "critical military skills." While this is an improvement from the original law, the recent modification adversely affected morale among those not included under the provision. As evidenced from current military actions around the world, all our men and women in uniform have and are continuing to make sacrifices for America and it is not fair to extend this benefit to only a select few. In many cases, this portability option makes the difference in whether or not a servicemember can pay for a child's college education. Military families across the nation and in my district are also making sacrifices, having loved ones gone, sometimes for months at a time. It is important to recognize this sacrifice and do what we can in government to ensure that our military families are taken care of on the homefront while their loved ones are on the frontlines.

In addition to the portability issues, the second part of this

bill would give active duty and reserve members more time to make a decision about whether or not to sign up for MGIB benefits. Currently, at initial military training, enlisted servicemembers are given a one-time, irrevocable MGIB enrollment opportunity at a cost of \$1,200. They must agree to have \$100 per month deducted from their pay for the first twelve months of their service. This timeframe is unacceptable for our young enlisted soldiers. By proposing that soldiers be given six months to make a decision on accepting MGIB benefits, they will have time to consult their commanding officers and non-commissioned officers and make an informed decision. This decision is too important to be rushed during the highly stressful time in their lives that is their initial military training. This is a decision that can drastically affect their futures and should be made at a time when they have had a chance to consult with their families and their superiors to determine if this is a course of action that they want to take.

We have made strides in recent years in improving military education benefits. Last year, we were successful in extending the timeframe for MGIB benefits for members of the military reserve from 10 years to 14 years from the time they enroll. This bill was critical to the welfare and the retention and recruiting efforts of our Armed Forces, but we still have a long way to go.

At a time when recruitment and retention are more important than ever, we must work to make military service an attractive career option. We have one of the most highly skilled and intelligent military forces in the world and we must make sure that this continues. All of us owe the men and women who have served our country an enormous amount of gratitude and respect. By giving our servicemembers the ability to transfer their education benefits to members of their family and by giving them adequate time to make a decision concerning their future education benefits, we are showing the importance of the sacrifice that they are making.