



**STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD  
OF  
THE AMERICAN LEGION**

**TO THE**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**ON**

**"PENDING AND DRAFT LEGISLATION"**

**NOVEMBER 2, 2023**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

<b>LEGISLATION</b>	<b>POSITION</b>
H.R. 522 – Deliver for Veterans Act, pg. 2	<b>Support</b>
H.R. 2830 – Veterans Improvement Commercial Driver License Act, pg. 3	<b>Support</b>
H.R. 3601 – Student Veteran Work Study Modernization Act, pg. 4	<b>Support</b>
ANS to H.R. 3722 – Daniel J. Harvey, Jr. and Adam Lambert Improving Servicemember Transition to Reduce Veteran Suicide Act, pg. 5	<b>Support</b>
H.R. 3816 – Veterans’ Entry to Apprenticeship Act, pg. 6	<b>Support</b>
H.R. 5190 – Military Family Protection from Debt Act, pg. 7	<b>Support</b>
H.R. 5785 – Veterans in STEM Expansion Act, pg. 8	<b>Support</b>
H.R. 5913 – Consolidating Veteran Employment Services for Improved Performance Act of 2023, pg. 9	<b>Oppose</b>
H.R. 5914 – To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the processes to approve programs of education for purposes of the educational assistance programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes, pg. 10	<b>Support</b>
H.R. 5965 – Transparency for Student Veterans Act of 2023, pg. 11	<b>Support</b>

**STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD OF  
THE AMERICAN LEGION  
TO THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
ON  
"PENDING AND DRAFT LEGISLATION"**

**November 2, 2023**

Chairman Van Orden, Ranking Member Levin, and distinguished members of this Subcommittee, on behalf of National Commander Daniel J. Seehafer and more than 1.6 million dues-paying members of The American Legion, we thank you for the opportunity to offer this statement for the record on pending and draft legislation.

The American Legion is directed by active Legionnaires who dedicate their time and resources to serve veterans, servicemembers, their families and caregivers. As a resolution-based organization, our positions are guided by more than 104 years of advocacy and resolutions that originate at the grassroots level of our organization. Every time The American Legion testifies, we offer a direct voice from the veteran community to Congress.

**H.R. 522 – Deliver for Veterans Act**

*To amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide or assist in providing a vehicle adapted for operation by disabled individuals to certain eligible persons, to pay expenses associated with the delivery of such vehicle, and for other purposes.*

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Automobile Adaptive Equipment (AAE) program provides adaptive vehicle equipment to allow Veterans to operate and enter/exit from their personal vehicles safely. Through the VA Driver's Rehabilitation Program, veterans are trained to operate these vehicles on our nation's roadways.<sup>1</sup> While the VA provides a one-time payment of \$23,255.72 for the adaptation of a motor vehicle, veterans who live outside the continental United States of America face additional financial challenges due to shipping costs. Despite many adaptations costing less than the one-time cap, current statutes prevent these funds from being applied to vehicle shipping. One example is veterans residing in Guam must pay significant shipping costs to have an adapted vehicle shipped.

H.R. 522, the *Deliver for Veterans Act*, would authorize VA to pay for the shipment of vehicles to disabled veterans no matter where they live, saving many veterans thousands of dollars. The American Legion believes these veterans should not be forced to pay for the adaptive equipment necessary to improve their mobility. The cost to ship adapted personal vehicles that will give some

---

<sup>1</sup> "Rehabilitation and Prosthetic Services - Automobile Adaptive Equipment (AAE)." U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. <https://www.prosthetics.va.gov/psas/AAE.asp>. Unless otherwise noted, all links accessed October 12, 2023.

semblance of personal independence and normalcy is a benefit this nation should provide to these wounded warriors.

Through Resolution No. 15: *Department of Veterans Affairs Prosthetic Program*, The American Legion supports innovation to ensure all veterans are provided opportunities to mobilize independently.<sup>2</sup>

**The American Legion supports H.R. 522 as written.**

**H.R. 2830 – Veteran Improvement Commercial Driver License Act**

*To amend title 38, United States Code, to revise the rules for approval by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs of commercial driver education programs for purposes of veterans educational assistance, and for other purposes.*

Many large commercial driver education programs offer training at multiple sites across the country. Under the current rules, each *individual* site must be approved by a State Approving Agency (SAA), even when every training site uses the identical curriculum. This requirement adds another administrative barrier for commercial driver programs to participate in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) education assistance programs, which reduces access for veterans to this valuable training.

H.R. 2830, the *Veteran Improvement Commercial Driver License Act*, modifies the rules for the approval of commercial driver education programs for participation in VA education assistance programs. Specifically, commercial driver educational institutions with multiple training sites will be authorized to submit a single annual report to the VA, demonstrating an SAA-approved curriculum will be delivered at each training site. The VA will consult with the Department of Transportation to determine the legitimacy of the training provider through the Training Provider Registry of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) and determine approval for *all sites* of a commercial driver program. This solution will speed up the VA-approval process for these training programs.

The American Legion has worked closely with the Task Force Movement to bring industry leaders, private partners, veterans service organizations, and government officials together to find ways of reducing the truck driver shortage, including expanding opportunities to transitioning servicemembers, veterans, and spouses.<sup>3</sup> It is estimated that 160,000 truck drivers will be needed in the United States to meet the demand over the next decade.<sup>4</sup> If not remedied, this impending shortage will devastate supply chains across the country, result in delays of the shipment of goods and materials, and cause negative impacts to the economy. Approximately 250,000 servicemembers transition annually. These transitioning individuals and their spouses are potential

---

<sup>2</sup> The American Legion Resolution No. 16 (2017): *Department of Veterans Affairs Prosthetic Program*. <https://archive.legion.org/node/7907>

<sup>3</sup> “National Education and Credentialing Summit Report.” The American Legion. 2022. <https://www.legion.org/publications/257465/national-education-and-credentialing-summit-report>

<sup>4</sup> “ATA Chief Economist Pegs Driver Shortage at Historic High.” American Trucking Associations (ATA). October 21, 2021. <https://www.trucking.org/news-insights/ata-chief-economist-pegs-driver-shortage-historic-high>

candidates for careers in the trucking industry. One way to make this opportunity more attractive to military-connected people is to create easily accessible training programs for careers in the trucking industry.

Improving access to education and training is key to gainful employment after military service. Reducing the red tape to obtain program approval from SAA and VA is necessary to improving access to training. Currently, more than 80,000 new credentialed truck drivers are needed to address the ballooning shortage.<sup>5</sup> VA can streamline the approval process for driver training programs, providing more opportunities for veterans to earn their commercial driver license and sustain the American economy.

Through Resolution No. 318: *Ensuring the Quality of Servicemember and Veteran Student's Education at Institutions of Higher Education*,<sup>6</sup> The American Legion supports any legislative proposal that improves access to education and training for veterans.

**The American Legion supports H.R. 2830 as written.**

### **H.R. 3601 – Student Veteran Work Study Modernization Act**

*To amend title 38, United States Code, to extend eligibility for a certain work-study allowance paid by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to certain individuals who pursue programs of rehabilitation, education, or training on at least a half-time basis, and for other purposes.*

In its current form, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) work-study program helps Veterans earn an income while enrolled in a college, vocational school, or professional training program. To qualify for the work-study allowance, the student must be enrolled in their education or training program at least three-quarters of full-time, must be able to complete their work-study contract while they are eligible for their VA education benefits, and, finally, must use an approved VA education benefits program to pay for the education or training. If a student veteran meets these three prerequisites, they can participate in work-study at a VA facility or in a position related to VA and veterans.<sup>7</sup> Although the program provides crucial financial support and professional experience to student veterans, these strict prerequisites limit the vocations veterans can pursue and the educational and professional programs in which veterans can enroll.

H.R. 3601, the *Student Veteran Work Study Modernization Act*, aims to ease the current prerequisites of the VA work-study program. The legislation will implement a five-year pilot program that expands eligibility for the work-study allowance program to students who are enrolled in education, training, and rehabilitation programs at least *half* of full-time, rather than three-quarters. The bill will require VA to submit a report to the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee detailing how many veterans participate in the improved work-study program, the

---

<sup>5</sup> *The truck driver shortage in the US continues.* American Journal of Transportation. August 3, 2023. <https://www.ajot.com/news/the-truck-driver-shortage-in-the-us-continues>

<sup>6</sup> The American Legion Resolution No. 318 (2016): *Ensuring the Quality of Servicemember and Veteran Student's Education at Institutions of Higher Education.* <https://archive.legion.org/node/470>

<sup>7</sup> “Work Study.” U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. <https://www.va.gov/education/about-gi-bill-benefits/how-to-use-benefits/work-study/>

percentage of participants who receive a four-year degrees, and the number of participants who gain full-time employment at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The American Legion supports the modernization proposed in H.R. 3601 as crucial to veterans' quality of life while training for a career. Among the stressors experienced by transitioning servicemembers are the financial challenges of lost income, with nearly 3-in-5 struggling to make ends meet.<sup>8</sup> Attending school full-time often precludes working full-time, and work-study programs offer veterans the chance to earn income while simultaneously pursuing their education..

Through Resolution No. 318: *Ensuring the Quality of Servicemember and Veteran Student's Education at Institutions of Higher Education*, The American Legion supports any legislative proposal that improves education opportunities for veterans.<sup>9</sup>

**The American Legion supports H.R. 3601 as written.**

**Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute to H.R. 3722 – Daniel J. Harvey, Jr. and Adam Lambert Improving Servicemember Transition to Reduce Veteran Suicide Act**

*To require a pilot program on activities under the pre-separation transition process of members of the Armed Forces for a reduction in suicide among veterans, and for other purposes.*

As hundreds of thousands of servicemembers transition from military service to civilian life each year, many struggle with finding adequate medical insurance and finding necessary medical and mental healthcare. The information provided in transition seminars is often insufficient or not specific enough to cover all veterans' various and diverse needs as they transition to the civilian sector. Many veterans have service-connected injuries and learning to navigate the complex Veterans Health Administration (VHA) can be nearly impossible while trying to find employment, relocate a family, and look for career training.<sup>10</sup>

The mandate set in the Affordable Care Act requires all citizens to have medical care insurance, and veterans have the option of enrolling in VHA to meet that requirement. However, enrollment has not been easy. The Solid Start Program (SSP) was rolled out in 2019, and was intended to contact and assist veterans with their enrollment in VHA and with finding medical and mental health services. However, SSP has been ineffective in its mandate due to the lack of VHA personnel and resources needed to staff the roles of liaisons and social workers to make this an effective, successful program.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> “Annual Warrior Survey, Longitudinal: Wave 2.” Wounded Warrior Project. 2022.

<https://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/media/ylwhpx4h/wwp-2022-annual-warrior-survey-full-report.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> The American Legion Resolution No. 318 (2016): *Ensuring the Quality of Servicemember and Veteran Student's Education at Institutions of Higher Education*. <https://archive.legion.org/node/470>

<sup>10</sup> Britzky, Haley. “Military Veterans Can Now Receive Free Emergency Mental Health Care.” CNN. January 17, 2023. <https://www.cnn.com/2023/01/17/politics/military-veterans-mental-health-care/index.html>.

<sup>11</sup> “Veterans Benefits: VA Could Enhance Outreach for Its Solid Start Program by Increasing Collaboration with Veterans Organizations.” U.S. Government Accountability Office. 5 January 2023. GAO-23-105699. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-23-105699>.

This amendment in the nature of a substitute for H.R. 3722 would mandate that, within a year of passage, the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) would implement a pilot SSP program at no more than ten Department of Defense facilities that serve at least 300 military members. This program will allow VHA to reach servicemembers before separation, reducing the number of veterans without healthcare services, and easing the burden on veterans awaiting disability claims being processed by the VA. The American Legion believes that veterans shouldn't have to be the subject matter experts on healthcare systems. Earlier exposure to VHA liaisons will improve the delivery of these services. The American Legion believes that newly separated veterans, and veterans who are newly enrolled in the VHA, will benefit from the additional resources and support this bill offers.<sup>12</sup>

Through Resolution No. 11: *Automatic Enrollment into Veterans Affairs Health Care System*, The American Legion supports automatically enrolling eligible veterans into VA care, with the option to opt-out, upon transition from military service to reduce barriers to care and encourage help-seeking behavior.

**The American Legion supports the Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute to H.R. 3722 as written.**

#### **H.R. 3816 – Veterans' Entry to Apprenticeship Act**

*To amend title 38, United States Code, to ensure that veterans may attend pre-apprenticeship programs using certain educational assistance provided by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.*

H.R. 3816, the *Veterans' Entry to Apprenticeship Act*, directs the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to treat pre-apprenticeship programs as apprenticeship programs for the purpose of providing GI Bill benefits. Funding assistance would equal the amount of an apprenticeship program, including the monthly housing allowance (MHA) under section 403 of title 37.

Pre-apprenticeships help individuals meet the entry requirements for Registered Apprenticeship programs and ensure they are prepared to succeed in a chosen career. A pre-apprenticeship program, by definition, has a documented partnership with at least one Registered Apprenticeship program. Quality pre-apprenticeship programs are a starting point toward a successful career path for under-represented job seekers (such as disadvantaged women and men, individuals with disabilities, and others) who may not be aware of this option to obtain jobs in critical industries with opportunities for advancement.

Currently, GI Bill education benefits do not cover the cost of Department of Labor-approved pre-apprenticeship programs, and veterans are not eligible for MHA in these programs. This creates financial barriers for veterans trying to gain qualifying training and credentials to enter high-demand industries.

---

<sup>12</sup> Brooks, Steven B. "VA Hoping to Get Newly Transitioning Veterans off to Solid Start." The American Legion. March 10, 2020. <https://www.legion.org/veteransbenefits/248533/va-hoping-get-newly-transitioning-veterans-solid-start>.

The American Legion has long supported pre-apprenticeship programs, such as the Department of Defense’s SkillBridge program, that allow transitioning servicemembers and veterans to gain valuable experience to succeed in their Registered Apprenticeship programs. These programs support a strong American economy by providing skilled labor, manufacturing, infrastructure, cybersecurity, and healthcare professionals. Proposals such as the *Veterans’ Entry to Apprenticeship Act* are not new. We first testified about this legislation before the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity in 2017,<sup>13</sup> and it is past time for this common-sense legislation to be passed.

Through Resolution No. 25: *Support and Expand Apprenticeship Opportunities for Servicemembers*,<sup>14</sup> The American Legion supports expanding apprenticeship opportunities across critical sectors, including manufacturing, infrastructure, cybersecurity, and health care.

**The American Legion supports H.R. 3815 as written.**

**H.R. 5190 – Military Family Protection from Debt Act**

*To amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to expand certain protections to dependents of members of the armed forces.*

H.R. 5190, the *Military Family Protection from Debt Act*, would provide National Guard and Reserve servicemembers’ dependents with the same interest rate protections that are applied to their sponsors’ debts. By expanding the 6% interest rate cap to servicemembers’ immediate family before or during active service, the *Military Family Protection from Debt Act* increases the financial readiness of the military and enhances national security capabilities.

In its current form, the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) protects servicemembers on active duty from interest rates of over 6% on debts incurred before their service begins, including car loans, student loans, and personal loans.<sup>15</sup> The legislation was designed to limit the amount of financial stress on National Guard and Reserve members who lose their civilian employment when activated, often earning far less while in uniform, allows them to fully focus their attention on their service to our nation.<sup>16</sup> However, the debt of servicemembers’ dependents is not currently eligible for the interest rate cap, jeopardizing the financial readiness of servicemembers and their families.

Financial readiness of military families has been named a significant component of operational readiness by the Department of Defense (DOD). Unfortunately, a 2020 DOD report found that about 30% of active duty and reserve component servicemembers were not financially

---

<sup>13</sup> Statement of John Kamin, The American Legion, before the House Veterans Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, on Pending and Draft Legislation. October 11, 2017. <https://archive.legion.org/node/7506>

<sup>14</sup> The American Legion Resolution No. 25 (2018): *Support and Expand Apprenticeship Opportunities for Servicemembers*. <https://archive.legion.org/node/3437>

<sup>15</sup> “The Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA).” Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. [https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb\\_ymyg-servicemembers-handout\\_skra-and-mla-protections.pdf](https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_ymyg-servicemembers-handout_skra-and-mla-protections.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> The Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA): Section-by-Section Summary. Updated June 5 2023 Congressional Research Service. R45283. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R45283>



comfortable.<sup>17</sup> Of those surveyed, junior enlisted and reserve component members reported the most financial instability and the least financially ready. While consumer protections provided by the SCRA help remedy the issue for single servicemembers, some military families are left with unprotected debt when a spouse or parent is called to active duty and must leave a well-paying civilian job. For this reason, the *Military Family Protection from Debt Act* is critical to ensuring both the financial well-being of military families and the operational readiness of the Armed Forces.

The American Legion recognizes the sacrifices made by military families and dependents during active duty. When one member of a family serves their country, their entire family serves as well. This legislation will relieve the financial burden of all who are called to the mission, ensuring that our military is relieved of undue burden and stress during their service to our nation.

Through Resolution No. 84: *Support and Strengthen Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA)*, The American urges Congress to pass legislation that protects servicemember and their dependents from excess interest rates that cause financial strain.<sup>18</sup>

**The American Legion supports H.R. 5190 as written.**

#### **H.R. 5785 – Veterans in STEM Expansion Act**

*To amend title 38, United States Code, to modify the requirements of the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship.*

The *Veterans in STEM Expansion Act* would remove burdensome requirements to access the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship and allow thousands of veterans to pursue degrees in STEM fields. As a provision of the *Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act*, the Edith Nourse Rogers Science Technology Engineering Math (STEM) Scholarship allows eligible Veterans to receive up to nine months of additional GI Bill benefits for training in high-demand fields. It was intended to provide veterans with additional educational benefits to complete their STEM program(s), which can often take longer to complete than traditional programs outside of the STEM fields.

To encourage widespread participation in this scholarship, Congress gave the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) the authority to authorize \$100 million in funding for fiscal year 2023 and each subsequent fiscal year.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, participation in this program has not met these initial expectations. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that of more than 130,000 veterans using the Post-9/11 GI Bill to pursue a degree in STEM fields from 2019 to 2021, only 3,500 veterans used the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship program to extend their benefits

---

<sup>17</sup> “Annual Report on the Financial Literacy and Preparedness of Members of the Armed Forces. December 2020.” Department of Defense. [https://finred.usalearning.gov/assets/downloads/FINRED-2020\\_FinancialLiteracy-R.pdf](https://finred.usalearning.gov/assets/downloads/FINRED-2020_FinancialLiteracy-R.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> The American Legion Resolution No. 342 (2016): *Support and Strengthen the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act*. <https://archive.legion.org/node/490>

<sup>19</sup> Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017, Pub. L. No. 115–48, Title I, §111, 131 Stat. 982 (2017). <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-115publ48/pdf/PLAW-115publ48.pdf>

due to many veterans not understanding the application process.<sup>20</sup> Of the maximum allowed expenditure of \$175 million during this time, less than \$58 million was used. More disturbingly, VA application data showed high rates of denial, especially among Black and female applicants.<sup>21</sup>

Currently, applications for the scholarship cannot be submitted until the student veteran has completed 60 semester credit hours and has 6 months of GI Bill benefits remaining, which is a very narrow window of eligibility. Also, the scholarship is currently available only to undergraduate STEM programs, further narrowing eligibility.

The *Veterans in STEM Expansion Act* removes some exclusions and expands veteran access to the Edith Nourse scholarship. This legislation adjusts the eligibility language in Section 3320 of title 38 to read, “45 standard semester (or 67.5 quarter) credit hours,” instead of the original language, which read “60 standard semester (or 90 quarter) credit hours.” This will provide more student veterans with time to plan their degree program to achieve their goals. Additionally, the bill opens eligibility for student veterans in graduate degree programs and for student veterans with more than six months of GI Bill eligibility remaining. We support this expansion of eligibility to more student veterans in STEM programs.

Through Resolution No. 318: *Ensuring the Quality of Servicemember and Veteran Student’s Education at Institutions of Higher Education*,<sup>22</sup> The American Legion supports any legislative proposal that improves access to education opportunities for veterans.

**The American Legion supports H.R. 5785 as written.**

**H.R. 5913 – Consolidating Veteran Employment Services for Improved Performance Act of 2023**

*To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve employment services for veterans by consolidating various programs in the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.*

The *Consolidating Veteran Employment Services for Improved Performance Act of 2023* would transfer specified veteran-related programs of the Department of Labor (DOL) to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), effective October 1, 2025. These are programs pertaining to job counseling, training, placement services, federal government employment services, homeless veteran reintegration programs, and employment and veteran benefits training under the Transition Assistance Programs (TAP). The proposed legislation further directs the President of the United States to include funding for the VA in Fiscal Year 2027 and onwards. The draft bill establishes a Deputy Undersecretary for Veterans’ Employment and Training to formulate all VA policies and procedures for these programs. Lastly, the bill consolidates VA disabled veterans’ outreach program specialists and local veterans’ employment representatives into a single provision, merging the two roles into a single position of veteran employment specialist.

---

<sup>20</sup> “VA Could Improve Support for Veterans Pursuing STEM Degrees.” U.S. Government Accountability Office. September 2022. GAO-22-105326. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-22-105326.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> The American Legion Resolution No. 318 (2016): *Ensuring the Quality of Servicemember and Veteran Student's Education at Institutions of Higher Education*. <https://archive.legion.org/node/470>

The American Legion believes that the VA should continue to focus on our veterans' economic concerns and ensure that employment, education, and housing services meet the high standards of excellence that veterans deserve. While it is incumbent on VA to prioritize economic opportunity programs and initiatives, The American Legion has concerns about transferring DOL's Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) to the VA. Having VETS under the DOL aligns with the broader mission of promoting and protecting the welfare of all American workers and job seekers. By retaining the VETS program in DOL, the federal government can provide a comprehensive approach to national workforce development and employment services, including those aimed at veterans. This will ensure veterans employment initiatives are kept in step with DOL's overarching national objectives.

Through Resolution No. 73: *Oppose the Transfer of Veterans' Employment and Training Service to the Department of Veterans Affairs*, The American Legion opposes all legislative or administrative efforts to transfer the Veterans' Employment and Training Service from the Department of Labor to the Department of Veterans Affairs.<sup>23</sup>

### **The American Legion opposes H.R. 5913.**

#### **H.R. 5914**

*To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the processes to approve programs of education for purposes of the educational assistance programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.*

In an effort to provide veterans with more information about education costs, Section 1018 of the *Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care And Benefits Improvement Act Of 2020* sets requirements for education institutions to submit financial forms to student veterans prior to their enrollment annotating projected financial costs of attendance. This requirement was modeled on the Department of Education's (ED) "College Financing Plan" (previously "Financial Aid Shopping Sheet"), a form that institutions voluntarily share with prospective students to provide simple and transparent information about costs and financial aid. This allows prospective students to easily compare institutions and make informed decisions about where to attend.<sup>24</sup>

Unlike the ED's College Financing Plan, which applies only to degree-granting institutions, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) financial form is mandatory for all institutions who enroll GI Bill students. While traditional institutions of higher learning have reported little difficulty with providing data points such as the estimated cost of courses and the acceptance of transfer credits, non-degree-granting institutions such as law enforcement and Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) academies have not been able to fulfill the requirements outlined in Section 1018. These institutions are structured differently than academic universities and reportable data typically varies more than the standard financial forms. This situation inhibits the ability of some education

---

<sup>23</sup> The American Legion Resolution No. 73 (2016): *Oppose the Transfer of Veterans' Employment and Training to the Department of Veterans Affairs*. <https://archive.legion.org/node/320>

<sup>24</sup> The College Financing Plan. U.S. Department of Education. <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/guid/aid-offer/index.html>

institutions to be certified by a School Certifying Official and unfortunately, GI Bill students are not able to enroll, reducing opportunities for veterans.

This draft legislation will amend current statutes to require these VA financial forms to be completed only “to the maximum extent practicable,” increasing the opportunity for more non-degree-granting institutions to comply with GI Bill reporting requirements and enroll GI Bill students. Law enforcement and EMT academies provide trained essential first-responders with many veterans interested in pursuing these public service careers. By easing the reporting requirements for these institutions, more veterans will have access to these careers.

The American Legion supports legislation to improve educational assistance, including advocating for greater educational opportunities. Improving the School Certifying Official approval process to establish additional opportunities for service-minded veterans and their desire to have a positive effect in their communities.

Through Resolution No. 327: *Support Further Assessment and Evaluation of Institutions of Higher Learning to Enable Veterans to Make Informed Education Choices*, The American Legion supports effective legislation evaluating education institutions on quality factors, such as, but not limited to, accreditation, transferability, cost, graduation rates, and acceptance in the job market.<sup>25</sup>

**The American Legion supports H.R. 5914 as currently written.**

### **H.R. 5965 – Transparency for Student Veterans Act of 2023**

*To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide additional information about certain postsecondary educational institutions to individuals entitled to educational assistance under the laws administered by such Secretary.*

The *Transparency for Student Veterans Act of 2023* is designed to increase the visibility of data on training and education institutions for veterans entitled to VA education benefits. H.R. 5965 ensures that programs of education leading to a certificate or professional license are required to provide information on the rates at which veterans re-enroll after completing their first year, the number of veterans or members who completed an education which led to a degree (specifying type of degree, e.g., associates, bachelors, postbaccalaureate), the certificate or professional license obtained (specifying type of certificate or license), the average time to completion (leading to a degree, certificate, or professional license), and the average annual salary of those who complete their education.

Access to these quality factors is vital to making informed decisions. The GI Bill is an earned benefit that should be utilized to the maximum extent possible. Without access to information that demonstrates the legitimacy of academic institutions, veterans are at risk of making poor decisions. H.R. 5965 will allow veterans to determine if the institution that they are considering will provide them with the return on investment they both desire and deserve.

---

<sup>25</sup> The American Legion Resolution No. 327 (2016): *Support Further Assessment and Evaluation of Institutions of Higher Learning to Enable Veterans to Make Informed Education Choices*. <https://archive.legion.org/node/475>

Data on veterans' outcomes in higher education has been under-reported and under-shared for far too long. There is also an unfortunate history of veterans being taken advantage of by predatory academic institutions. In some cases, academic institutions purposely withhold quality factors—to entice veterans into enrolling in their programs. Legislation like the *Transparency for Student Veterans Act of 2023* is crucial to veterans' academic and future economic success by ensuring full transparency of quality data from all training and education institutions who enroll student veterans. The American Legion testified on similar draft legislation in 2020, specifically regarding the GI Bill Comparison tool, and will continue to advocate for legislation that ensures veterans are fully empowered to choose their best-suited academic and professional paths.

Through Resolution No. 327: *Support Further Assessment and Evaluation of Institutions of Higher Learning to Enable Veterans to Make Informed Education Choices*, The American Legion supports effective legislation evaluating education institutions on quality factors, such as, but not limited to, accreditation, transferability, cost, graduation rates, and acceptance in the job market.<sup>26</sup>

**The American Legion supports this H.R. 5965 as written.**

### **Conclusion**

Chairman Van Orden, Ranking Member Levin, and distinguished members of the subcommittee; The American Legion thanks you for your leadership and for allowing us the opportunity to submit the positions of our 1.6 million members on the importance of these pieces of proposed legislation. Questions concerning this testimony can be directed to John Kamin at 202-263-5748, or [jkamin@legion.org](mailto:jkamin@legion.org).

---

<sup>26</sup> The American Legion Resolution No. 327 (2016): *Support Further Assessment and Evaluation of Institutions of Higher Learning to Enable Veterans to Make Informed Education Choices*. <https://archive.legion.org/node/475>