

The American Legion



OFFICE OF THE
NATIONAL COMMANDER

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July 29, 2013

Honorable Richard Durbin, Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense
SD-122 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Durbin:

As a longtime overseer and advocate for the GI Bill and veterans' education benefits, The American Legion takes a keen interest in ensuring these benefit programs serve their intended purpose. As you know, the Department of Defense Tuition Assistance and Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts (MyCAA) Programs have been growing rapidly, due in part to the support The American Legion provided for the amendment to the Continuing Resolution that reinstated these important benefits earlier this year. The ongoing discussion regarding student loan interest rates has highlighted the disproportionate rising tuition costs as compared to other economic growth indicators, and as advocates for service members, veterans, and their loved ones, we request your help in improving these benefit programs by implementing provisions to protect the military community.

We urge this committee to develop legislation to ensure that Tuition Assistance and MyCAA dollars finance only those programs that leave graduates academically prepared to test for relevant professional licenses. It is unfair to service members and their spouses, and a poor use of taxpayer dollars, to allow programs that purport to prepare students for civilian careers to tap into military benefit programs when graduates are left unprepared to test for relevant professional licenses.

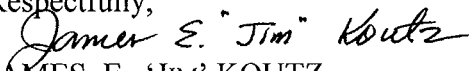
Next, thirty percent of institutions receiving MyCAA funds are unregulated, do not qualify for Department of Education (DOE) aid under Title IV, or lack accreditation of any kind. Please direct the Department of Defense (DOD) to require schools accepting these funds to meet the same standards the DOE requires for Title IV funds to include accreditation and basic educational quality. Rather than trying to invent yet another layer of bureaucracy, government

should take advantage of systems already in place to evaluate quality institutions suitable for our service members, their family members, and our veteran population.

Finally, please restrict Tuition Assistance and MyCAA funds to those institutions of higher education that do not utilize federal education aid to pay for recruiting and marketing. The American Legion is concerned that a disproportionate percentage of student tuition is being dedicated to marketing expenses, leaving core educational programs suffering from a lack of resources and quality instructors.

It is because we understand that education benefits are a critical investment in America's veterans and service members that we passed Resolution No. 303: Support Regulation of For-Profit Schools and State Approving Agencies and that we now ask you to put into place additional protections for these programs. The American Legion applauds your leadership in addressing this critical issue facing our nation's service members and veterans and looks forward to working with this committee further as we strive to protect our military and veteran population.

Respectfully,


JAMES E. 'JIM' KOUTZ
National Commander
The American Legion

C: Honorable Thad Cochran, Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense