

## **Post-9/11 Veterans Education Assistance**

On June 30, 2008 the President signed into law his final war spending bill that provides not only one more year of funding for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, but also funding to expand veterans education benefits for those who served after September 11, 2001. This new law will have a significant and positive impact for student veterans and public colleges and universities.

### **Eligibility**

- The benefits are effective August 1, 2009 and education under the new benefit program must be completed after July 31, 2009.
- Benefits are open to both active-duty servicemembers and reservists called to active duty after September 11, 2001.
- Eligibility lasts for 15 years after discharge (those covered under present MGIB still have the 10-year limit). The current “buy-in” to the MGIB will be eliminated for the new MGIB.
- Eligibility calculated on a sliding scale based on length of active-duty service:
  - Active-duty service for at least 36 months = 100% eligibility
  - Active-duty service for at least 30 continuous days with discharge due to service-connected disability = 100% eligibility
  - Active-duty service for 30–36 months = 90% eligibility
  - Active-duty service for 24–30 months = 80% eligibility
  - Active-duty service for 18–24 months = 70% eligibility
  - Active-duty service for 12–18 months = 60% eligibility
  - Active-duty service for 6–12 months = 50% eligibility
  - Active service for 90 days–6 months = 40% eligibility

### **Tuition and Fees Benefit**

- Benefits cover 36 months of tuition and fees at public colleges and universities, as well as additional stipends for housing and books.
- Private institutions have the option to sign on to the “Yellow Ribbon G.I. Educational Advancement Program,” where they agree that if the VA provides up to 50% of any remaining tuition and mandatory fees left uncovered by the terms of new MGIB, the institution will provide an equal matching percentage. The Secretary will make a list of institutions available on their Web site with information on the agreements.

### **Non-tuition Benefits**

- Book stipend of up to \$1,000/academic year (prorated for part-time enrollment).
- Monthly housing stipend for veteran students attending on-campus classes (online and correspondence students are not eligible, and active-duty military students are

- not eligible) equal to the Basic Housing Allowance (BAH) for an E-5 with dependents. The average stipend is expected to be \$1100 per month.
- Tutoring assistance (which must be certified as essential and required) of \$1,200 maximum.
  - Payment for one licensure/certification test, maximum of \$2,000.
  - Relocation assistance of \$500 for those who reside “in a county (or similar entity utilized by the Bureau of the Census) with less than seven persons per square mile, according to the most recent decennial Census” and who physically relocate at least 500 miles or “travel by air to physically attend an institution of higher education because the individual cannot travel to such institution by automobile or other established form of transportation due to an absence of road or other infrastructure.”
  - Tuition benefits only may be transferred by the VA to spouses or dependent children if the servicemember has completed 6 years of service and signs up to serve for 4 more years (for spouses) or has completed 10 years of service (for dependent children).
  - Tuition benefits can be divided between the veteran and his or her dependent or spouse as long as the 36 month limit is not exceeded.

### **Operational Issues**

- Payment will be sent directly to institutions, not the veterans. It is estimated that it will take the VA one year to get a computer system up and running.