

Bob Dole
U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS



NEWS

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CONTACT: Clarkson Hine
(202) 224-5358

G.I. BILL REFORM

DOLE INTRODUCES SERVICE PERSONS RE-ADJUSTMENT ACT OF 1995; LONG-OVERDUE VETERANS EDUCATION MEASURE TO PROVIDE FLEXIBILITY & ECONOMIC EQUALITY

WASHINGTON - Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole late yesterday introduced the Service Persons Re-adjustment Act of 1995 on the floor of the U.S. Senate. Senator Dole's statement follows:

Today I am proud to introduce the Service Persons Re-adjustment Act of 1995. This legislation provides our brave service men and women with education benefits comparable to those earned by generations of American veterans. In my view, this measure is long overdue.

Helping Veterans Realize Dream of College Education

Fifty years ago, Congress and the American Legion worked diligently to pass the "Servicemen's Re-adjustment Act of 1944," better known as the "GI Bill of Rights." That measure is widely recognized as one of the best pieces of legislation ever enacted.

Thanks to the GI Bill, a majority of veterans -- including minorities and women -- realized their dreams of earning college degrees. In turn, they contributed heartily to the greatest economic boom in U.S. history. The nation transformed from an industrial giant into a technological world leader.

When the original GI Bill was introduced in Congress, many members -- and President Roosevelt -- feared that the program's cost would bankrupt the country. Colleges and universities nationwide argued that such a policy would lower educational standards.

Today, we face tight budget constraints and similar concerns about the cost of the GI program. But time has proven that the dollars invested in veterans' education yield great returns.

I ask my colleagues to recognize the success of this program, and demonstrate the same resolve as members of Congress did in 1944. In my view, this is a worthwhile investment in our nation's future.

Current Bill Inadequate to Meet Veterans' Needs

Simply put, the current Montgomery GI Bill is inadequate to meet veterans' educational needs. The GI Bill once covered 100% of a veteran's education. Unfortunately, it now covers only 37%. Plenty of servicemen and women sign up for the program. But once in school, they quickly realize that their benefits pale in comparison to their financial obligations.

America's veterans thoroughly understand responsibility and sacrifice. They are willing to work hard and invest in their own education. But they should not be forced to bear greater financial burdens than non-veterans who benefit from more generous government education programs.

The current GI Bill also fails to provide the flexibility necessary to meet veterans' needs. Whether a veteran attends a one-year vocational school or a four-year university, the program benefits remain fixed. Under my proposed legislation, benefits are shaped to meet educational or training goals by allowing veterans to choose the duration of their benefit packages.

An improved GI Bill would also promote economic equality. The bill allows the less fortunate to earn their education, rather than depending on social handouts. Improved benefits would also help level the playing field for the increasing number of women and minorities in the military.

Wise Investment in America's Future

The American Legion has repeatedly asked Congress to increase education benefits for the brave men and women who have served honorably. The legislation I am introducing enables service members to invest more money in their own futures. It teaches young men and women the value of working hard and saving money to reach their goals.

Educational assistance for veterans consistently proves to be a winning concept. Many of my colleagues are present today because of the GI Bill. Their benefits were far more generous than what we provide our soldiers today. I hope those Senators will support this measure. No doubt about it, this new program -- like the original GI Bill -- is a wise investment in America's future.

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