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To: Department Adjutants; Department Commanders
CC: Division Directors; National Executive Committee; National Officers; National Vice Commanders; Past National Commanders
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Subject: The American Legion aids in relief to GI bill students

Attachments:
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The American Legion aids in G.I. Bill financial relief effort

VA to issue emergency checks to veteran students awaiting benefits

WASHINGTON (September 26, 2009) – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) says it is preparing to issue checks of up to \$3,000 to students awaiting overdue Post 9/11 G.I. Bill benefits. VA Secretary Eric Shinseki made the announcement Friday night in the wake of reports from The American Legion and other veterans' service organizations that some students are experiencing undue financial hardships as the result of delays in the reception of G.I. Bill benefit checks. Some students, it is reported, have been forced to borrow money or take on extracurricular work to pay tuition, fees and other educational expenses while they await their newly implemented benefits. The emergency checks will be made available to eligible students through VA regional offices beginning October 1, according to Secretary Shinseki's office.

"It is heartening to see the Secretary and his department responding so swiftly and decisively to this unfortunate situation," said National Commander Clarence E. Hill of The American Legion. "This is a brand new benefits program, instituted just weeks ago, so some startup glitches are to be expected," he continued, "but the VA's willingness to rectify the problem should be applauded. As I said earlier this week, our veteran students should be free to concentrate on their studies rather than be worried by financial burdens. Secretary Shinseki has echoed my sentiment.

"The American Legion offers its extensive outreach services in implementing the emergency student relief program," continued Hill. "We are ready to help students apply for and obtain the benefits they deserve."

Post 9/11 G.I. Bill students can contact The American Legion directly for assistance with educational benefits questions and issues at 202-263-2995 or by sending an email to the vice president of the National Association of Veterans' Program Administrators at askvalerie@legion.org

The American Legion has created a website, www.mygibill.org, to aid veterans in understanding and applying for their benefits under the new Post 9/11 GI Bill.

With a current membership of 2.5-million wartime veterans, The American Legion was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national security, veterans affairs, Americanism, and youth programs. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through more than 14,000 posts across the nation.

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