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# The American Legion

*For God and country*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## The American Legion celebrates the inauguration of new Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits

WASHINGTON, (July 29, 2009) – As veterans start the new academic year, the leader of The American Legion said he is happy to see that they will be able to enjoy the benefits of the new GI Bill.

“August 1st will be a proud day for us,” said David K. Rehbein, national commander of the nation’s largest veterans service organization. “That’s when the educational benefits in the Post -9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Act take effect –benefits that The American Legion worked hard to bring about.”

In fact, The American Legion was so instrumental in the passage of the most sweeping veterans benefit in generations that U.S. Rep. Chet Edwards said at the time, “Passing this historic new GI Bill into law could not have happened without the dedicated efforts of The American Legion.”

The Legion's role in the formulation of the new GI Bill has **deep** historical **roots**. Members of The American Legion drafted the original Servicemen's Readjustment Act, popularly known as the GI Bill, in 1944. It was written in longhand on hotel stationery by American Legion Past National Commander Harry Colmery. The GI Bill is widely considered the greatest domestic legislation ever passed by Congress.

The largest scholarship program in U.S. history, the GI Bill also made home ownership a possibility for a new generation of Americans, transforming the American economy and creating the middle class.

The American Legion continued its staunch advocacy for veterans, playing a key role in every readjustment legislation since 1944. While some of the successors to the GI Bill fell short of what The American Legion hoped for, the organization worked closely with then-U.S. Rep. G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery on the improved "Montgomery GI Bill," which benefited peacetime veterans.

While The American Legion has never stopped pushing for a comprehensive benefit to cover all education costs for veterans, the organization went clearly on the record at its 1992 National Convention in Chicago. Delegates there unanimously passed Resolution 3, which called for the establishment of "a benefit package commensurate with those provided veterans of World War II, Korea and Vietnam."

As the Global War on Terrorism progressed, it became clear that National Guard and Reserve veterans, who were serving in large numbers during the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, were not **being** compensated as generously as their active-duty counterparts.

It was time for a new GI Bill. The American Legion and Congress, among others, set about creating one. A longtime Legionnaire, Sen. Jim Webb, D-Va., built a bipartisan coalition in the Senate. The final bill included a provision that allowed for the transferability of benefits to family members, an additional benefit supported by The American Legion. The bill was signed by President George W. Bush on June 30, 2008.

The new GI Bill does not replace existing education programs for veterans, but augments them. Depending upon individual needs and eligibilities, benefits of the older Montgomery GI Bill, the Montgomery GI Bill/Selected Reserve, and the Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP) are still available as well.

The American Legion explains veterans educational benefits in great detail at [www.mygibill.org](http://www.mygibill.org).

"The new GI Bill is a bill worthy of its name," Rehbein said. "While we believe this is a great benefit to America's veterans and their families, The American Legion will monitor the administration of it and ensure that the benefits that these veterans so richly deserve

are not diminished. If any veteran has difficulty accessing their GI Bill benefits, we at The American Legion want to know about it. All they need to do is contact [The American Legion](#).”

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 the mentoring of youth. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through more than 14,000 posts across the nation.