

From: March, Joseph H.
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Attachments:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The American Legion supports outsourcing GI Bill claims as 'temporary' measure

WASHINGTON (Oct. 28, 2009) - "A good temporary solution," is how the leader of the nation's largest veterans service organization characterized VA's decision to employ an outside contractor to assist in processing the large volume of GI Bill claims.

The American Legion which usually opposes outsourcing services that the organization believes the Department of Veterans Affairs should directly provide, recognizes the unprecedented number of claims facing VA as a result of the Post 9/11 GI Bill and the urgency of delivering those benefits in a timely manner.

"The American Legion applauds the Department of Veterans Affairs and Secretary (Eric) Shinseki for taking prompt and decisive action to ensure that the applications are processed as quickly as possible," said National Commander Clarence E. Hill. "However, as we have indicated in the past, The American Legion believes that VA's personnel are very capable of handling the workload and implementation under normal circumstances. We urge the secretary to employ the services of this outside contractor only as long as they are needed to expedite the current flood of applications. We would not approve of a long-term arrangement under which an outside contractor would be performing functions that VA's staff is perfectly capable of performing for itself."

Post 9/11 GI Bill students can also 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 askvalerie@legion.org. Moreover, The American Legion has created a website, www.mygibill.org www.mygibill.org, to aid veterans in understanding and applying for their new educational benefits.

Shortly after the Post 9/11 GI Bill passed Congress, U.S. Rep. Chet Edwards, D-Texas, a key congressional appropriator, said the new GI Bill would not have happened without the hard work of The American Legion.

"Unlike some organizations, The American Legion does not wish to unfairly castigate VA. We believe in being part of the solution, not the problem," Hill said, referring to the GI Bill backlog.

About The American Legion

With a current membership of 2.5-million wartime veterans, The American Legion is the nation's largest veterans organization. It 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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Media contacts: For interviews with Cmdr. Hill or other requests, call Craig Roberts, (202) 263-2982, Cell (202) 406-0887 or Joe March, (317) 630-1253; Cell (317) 748-1926. A high resolution photo of Cmdr. Hill is available at www.legion.org www.legion.org.