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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Legion supports end to student-veteran victimization

Executive order to protect veterans from exploitation by for-profit schools ‘an important victory,’ says national commander.

WASHINGTON (April 27, 2012) -- A longstanding campaign by The American Legion to end the victimization of military veterans and families by some for-profit schools has culminated in an order by President Obama to halt the questionable practices.

On April 27, President Barack Obama signed an executive order to help protect students and prospective students using their Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits from aggressive and deceptive targeting by educational institutions, particularly for-profit career colleges. The American Legion was instrumental in the execution of the presidential order.

“This is an important victory of behalf of our young servicemembers and veterans who, in seeking to better themselves educationally, have been wrongly and unconscionably victimized by some institutions who see America’s finest as nothing more than a vulnerable market,” American Legion National Commander Fang A. Wong said. “I am proud that The American Legion had a big hand in the president’s decision to take this bold action.”

Since the Post 9/11 GI Bill became law, The American Legion has been closely monitoring reports of some institutions encouraging veterans to take out costly private loans from them, rather than advising the students of available federal aid. Reports indicate that some schools have also been engaging in high-pressure and misleading recruiting practices at military installations, of not providing realistic and accurate data on the school’s academic standing and the eventual career value of their diplomas and degrees. In some cases, institutions have recruited veterans with TBI (traumatic brain injury) and PTS (post traumatic stress) without giving them the counseling and support needed to help them complete their studies.

President Obama’s executive order addresses these practices to, in the words of The White House, “help ensure that students are aware of the true cost and likelihood of completing their education at an institution prior to enrolling.”

In October 2011, the National Executive Committee of The American Legion adopted a resolution from the Legion’s Economic Commission to “Support Regulation of For-Profit Schools and State Approving Agencies.” The resolution outlined measures that were recently

communicated to President Obama in a letter co-signed by several veterans service organizations.

“Congress has been examining this issue for some time,” American Legion Economic Division Director Joe Sharpe said. “Legislation similar to the executive order in its intent has been introduced. However, the president has decided to take action now, rather than wait for House and Senate bills to be considered, debated, rewritten and passed. It is no coincidence that, just weeks after our letter was delivered to him, President Obama issued this order. We applaud this.”

Obama signed the order during a visit to Fort Stewart , Ga., in the company of about two dozen members of The American Legion.

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