The American Legion

OFFICE OF THE
NATIONAL COMMANDER

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July 11, 2017

The Honorable Phil Roe, Chairman
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
United States House of Representatives
335 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-4201

Dear Chairman Roe:

On behalf of more than 2 million members of The American Legion, the nation's largest veterans organization, we express our support for draft legislation entitled the *Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017.* This bill, as currently written, would launch a new era for all who have honorably served in uniform, and for the nation as a whole. It would close current gaps in the existing Post 9/11 GI Bill and guarantee that veterans have access to their hard-earned GI Bill benefits beyond the current 15-year time limit. In essence, it would help today's GI Bill live up to the world-changing accomplishments of the original, which transformed America after World War II.

First, we believe that all veterans who have honorably served this nation have earned education assistance as partial compensation for the sacrifices they have made. Unfortunately, many who have served in uniform are currently left behind. The *Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017* alleviates these problems by improving GI Bill benefits for National Guard and Reserve Members, Purple Heart recipients, survivors and families of the fallen, as well as students who have experienced sudden school closures, such as those at Corinthian Colleges and ITT Technical Institutes.

By removing the 15-year time limit, the GI Bill can truly become a lifetime benefit not only for veterans but for the economy. Years from now, veterans who were unable to attend institutions of higher learning during their military service or immediately afterward will be able to earn degrees and begin rewarding careers that can lead our economy. The proposal would also achieve a long list of urgent changes, including: extension of the Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee on Education (VACOE), extension of the VA Work-Study Program, additional funds for the Veterans Success on Campus (VSOC) program, much-needed funding for State Approving Agencies, and technology resources for the Veterans Benefits Administration.

Through Resolution No. 349, *Support Legislation to Improve the Post-9/11 GI Bill*, The American Legion stands firmly behind the *Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017*. As The American Legion did when the original GI Bill was passed in 1944, and subsequent versions were introduced, we will fight for this improved version until it is sent to the President's desk for his signature. The American Legion will continue to work closely with you to ensure that veterans and their families rally across this country for these improvements.

We greatly appreciate the work of your office and that of your colleagues on this important proposal that will positively affect thousands of American veteran and their families.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Schmidt

CHARLES E. SCHMIDT
National Commander
The American Legion

CC: Ranking Member Tim Walz