

Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act – Forever GI Bill



The Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act, also known as the “Forever GI Bill,” was signed into law on August 17, 2017, and brings significant changes to Veterans’ education benefits over the next few years. Most enhance or expand education benefits for Veterans, servicemembers, families and survivors. Here’s a list of the changes and when they go into effect.

Change:

Effective date:

Assistance for Students Affected by School Closures and Certain Program Disapprovals

Students may be able to receive back entitlement charged against them if their school closed while they were attending.

Immediately

Elimination of 15-year Time Limit to Use the Post-9/11 GI Bill

The law removes the 15-year time limit for the use of Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits for those whose last discharge or release from active duty is on or after January 1, 2013, children of deceased servicemembers who became entitled to Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits on or after January 1, 2013, and all spouses using Fry Scholarship.

Immediately

Independent Study at Technical Schools and Non-Institutions of Higher Learning (IHLs)

Beneficiaries will now be able to use their educational assistance to pursue accredited independent study (e.g., online learning) at non-IHLs. The non-IHLs must be area career and technical education schools that provide postsecondary level education or postsecondary vocational institutions. Note: This change does not apply to Dependents’ Educational Assistance program beneficiaries.

Immediately

Priority Enrollment

VA will improve outreach and transparency to Veterans and servicemembers by providing information on whether institutions of higher learning administer a priority enrollment system that allows certain student Veterans to enroll in courses earlier than other students.

Immediately

REAP Eligibility Credited Toward Post-9/11 GI Bill Program

Reservists who established eligibility to educational assistance under the Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP) before November 25, 2015, and lost it due to the program’s sunset may elect to have that service credited towards the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Immediately

Work-Study Expansion

The law removes the expiration date for qualifying work-study activities.

Immediately

GI Bill® Monthly Housing Allowance

Those who first use Post-9/11 GI Bill on or after January 1, 2018, will receive a monthly housing allowance based on the Department of Defense basic housing allowance (BAH) for monthly housing rates.

January 1, 2018

Changes to Licensing and Certification Charges

Entitlement charges for licensing and certification exams and national tests under the Post-9/11 GI Bill will be prorated based on the actual amount of the fee charged for the test. This lowers the entitlement charge to benefits.

August 1, 2018

GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at the official U.S. government Web site at <https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill>.

Changes to Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance**August 1, 2018**

The new law decreases the amount of entitlement that new eligible individuals will receive under the Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance (DEA) program from 45 months to 36 months.

Changes to Transfer of Benefits (TEB)**August 1, 2018**

Veterans who transferred entitlement to a dependent can now designate a new dependent if the original dependent dies. If the Veteran dies, a dependent who received transferred entitlement can now designate a new eligible dependent of the Veteran to transfer any of the dependent's remaining entitlement.

Informing Schools About Beneficiary Entitlement**August 1, 2018**

VA must make available to educational institutions information about the amount of educational assistance to which a beneficiary is entitled. A beneficiary may elect not to provide the information to an educational institution.

Monthly Housing Allowance During Active Duty Service (Including Reserve Components performing Active Duty Service)**August 1, 2018**

VA will prorate the monthly housing allowance under the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Currently, those who leave active duty can't receive their housing allowance until the beginning of the next full month after being released from active duty. With this change, the student will receive housing payments effective the day of discharge.

Monthly Housing Based on Campus Where Student Attends Most Classes**August 1, 2018**

The law requires the monthly housing allowance under the Post-9/11 GI Bill program to be calculated based on the zip code of the campus where the student physically attends the majority of classes, rather than the location of the school where the student is enrolled.

Pilot Programs for Technology Courses**August 1, 2018**

VA will develop a pilot program to provide eligible Veterans with the opportunity to enroll in high technology education programs that VA determines provides training and skills sought by employers in a relevant field or industry.

Purple Heart Recipients**August 1, 2018**

Servicemembers and honorably discharged Veterans who were awarded a Purple Heart on or after September 11, 2001, will be entitled to Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits at the 100-percent benefit level for up to 36 months.

Reserve Component Benefits**August 1, 2018**

The law authorizes service by Guard and Reserve members under 10 U.S.C 12304a and 12304b to receive Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits.

Reserve Duty That Counts Toward Post-9/11 Eligibility**August 1, 2018**

The time that a Reservist was ordered to active duty to receive authorized medical care, to be medically evaluated for disability, or to complete a Department of Defense health care study on or after September 11, 2001, now counts as active duty toward eligibility for the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Yellow Ribbon Extension to Fry and Purple Heart Recipients**August 1, 2018**

Recipients of the Fry Scholarship and Purple Heart may use the Yellow Ribbon Program.

More Benefits for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Programs**August 1, 2019**

VA will provide up to nine months of additional Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to eligible individuals who are enrolled in a STEM field program of education.

Consolidation of Benefit Levels**August 1, 2020**

Eliminates the 40-percent benefit level and expands the 60-percent benefit level under the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Yellow Ribbon Extension to Active Duty Servicemembers**August 1, 2022**

Active duty servicemembers may use the Yellow Ribbon Program.

Additional resources:

- Visit www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/ForeverGIBill.asp for more information.
- Our Education Call Center is available at 1-888-442-4551 (Monday – Friday, 7 a.m. – 6 p.m. CST) for any questions about GI Bill benefits.