



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

June 3, 2009

Dear Higher Education Executive:

On May 1, 2009, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) began accepting applications for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, the most comprehensive education benefits package since the original GI Bill was signed into law in 1944. Earlier this year, you were invited to participate in the supplemental Yellow Ribbon Program to further assist Veterans with the cost of tuition and fees at private institutions. President Obama has stated that implementation of the new GI Bill is of the utmost importance, and it is to me as well. VA is therefore seeking the fullest possible participation in the Yellow Ribbon Program by institutions of higher learning.

If your institution has already made the commitment to participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program, thank you on behalf of America's Veterans. I look forward to sending you a personal letter of gratitude. Over 700 colleges and universities have already signed up.

The opportunity to enroll in the Yellow Ribbon Program for this year will draw to a close on June 15, 2009. If you have not yet signed up, I encourage you to consider the contributions that this program can make to your school and to America's future prosperity.

As Educators, I am sure you are well aware that the original GI Bill provided millions of Veterans the opportunity to become active participants in revitalizing the American dream through their engagement in higher education. It changed the course of our history and the latter half of the 20th century. When Veterans went back to their communities with their college degrees, they became our leaders in religion, education, business, and government, and epitomized what it was to be a civic leader.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill has the potential to create the same kind of impact for development, social change, and leadership across America in the 21st Century. In these tumultuous times, a new generation of leaders emerging from our institutions of higher education to lead America into a new era of prosperity is a vision for the future that President Obama and I both share.

The enclosed fact sheets provide a brief overview of the benefits provided under the new Post-9/11 GI Bill and the Yellow Ribbon Program. They are intended to assist you in preparing to serve our Veterans as honorably as they have served us.

I hope this information will assist you in planning for the implementation of the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the Yellow Ribbon Program. We are confident that together we can provide the best educational opportunities possible for Servicemembers, Veterans, and their dependents. For more information, please visit www.GIBILL.VA.gov. Questions about the Yellow Ribbon Program may be sent to our Yellow Ribbon corporate mailbox at yellow.ribbon@va.gov, or to bill.spruce@va.gov at 202-461-9839.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric K. Shinseki".

Eric K. Shinseki

Enclosures

Post-9/11 GI Bill: General Information

Who is eligible for benefits under the Post-9/11 GI Bill?

Individuals who serve at least 90 days of aggregate service after September 10, 2001 are eligible.

- To be eligible for 100% of the benefit, an individual must have served an aggregate of 36 months of active duty service, or have been discharged for a service-connected disability after 30 days of continuous service. **NOTE:** Active-duty service time required by graduates of a Service Academy or ROTC does **not** count toward the three years necessary to qualify for full benefits.
- For those who served fewer than 36 months, the percentage of benefit ranges from 40% to 90%:
 - 90% - 30 total months (including service on active duty in entry level and skill training)
 - 80% - 24 total months (including service on active duty in entry level and skill training)
 - 70% - 18 total months (**excluding** service on active duty in entry level and skill training)
 - 60% - 12 total months (**excluding** service on active duty in entry level and skill training)
 - 50% - 6 total months (**excluding** service on active duty in entry level and skill training)
 - 40% - 90 or more days (**excluding** service on active duty in entry level and skill training).For example, an individual with five months of qualifying service could receive 40% of the tuition benefit, 40% of the monthly housing allowance, and a maximum of \$400 books and supplies stipend.
- Veterans must have an honorable discharge or other qualifying discharge (e.g. hardship, condition interfering with duty, etc.) to be eligible.

What benefits do students receive under the Post-9/11 GI Bill?

Depending on each individual's situation, benefits could include payment of tuition and fees, a monthly housing allowance, a stipend for books and supplies, college fund ("kicker") payments, a rural benefit payment, and a Yellow Ribbon benefit. Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits differ from other education assistance programs in that each type of payment is issued separately, with some payments made directly to the school and others issued to the individual.

- **Tuition and Fees:** These payments are issued to the school on behalf of the individual at the time the certificate of enrollment is processed
 - **Not on active duty:** For individuals not on active duty, the amount is prorated according to length of service. The amount paid is limited to the highest amount of tuition and fees charged for full-time, undergraduate training at a public institution of higher learning in the state where the student is enrolled. *(A chart of maximum in-state tuition and fees for 2008-2009 is on the VA GI Bill website at http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/CH33/Tuition_and_fees.htm.)*
 - **On active duty:** Individuals on active duty may receive the total amount of tuition and fees. The amount is not limited to the state maximum.
- **Monthly housing allowance:** This payment is issued directly to the student at the beginning of each month for education and training pursued the previous month. The amount is prorated based on length of service. **NOTE:** Active duty personnel are not eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill monthly housing allowance. Students enrolled exclusively in online training are not eligible for the housing allowance.
- **Books and supplies stipend:** This payment issued directly to the student when the school certifies and VA processes the enrollment. This benefit is prorated based on length of service. **NOTE:** Active duty personnel are not eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill books and supplies stipend.

- **Yellow Ribbon payments:** The Yellow Ribbon Program allows degree-granting institutions to enter into a voluntary agreement with VA to fund tuition expenses that exceed the highest public in-state undergraduate tuition rate for individuals eligible for the 100% payment tier. The institution can contribute up to 50% of those expenses and VA will match the same amount as the institution. This payment is issued to the school when the school certifies and VA processes the student's enrollment. (See **Yellow Ribbon Program fact sheet** or the web page — http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/CH33/Yellow_ribbon.htm — for details on this program.)
- **College fund or "kicker":** These payments are issued directly to the student based on "rate of pursuit" (full- or part-time study) and the education benefits program under which the kicker is payable. Post-9/11 GI Bill kickers will be issued monthly with the housing allowance; all other kickers will be issued in a lump sum when the student's enrollment certification is processed.
- **Rural benefit payments:** This one-time, lump-sum payment of \$500 is issued directly to a student who resides in a county with six persons or fewer per square mile (as determined by the most recent decennial census), and who either:
 - physically relocates at least 500 miles to attend an educational institution, or
 - relocates by air (any distance) to physically attend an educational institution, if no other land-based transportation exists.

What kind of education and training does the Post-9/11 GI Bill cover?

Approved training under the Post-9/11 GI Bill includes graduate and undergraduate degrees. All training programs must be offered by a degree-granting institution of higher learning (IHL) and approved for GI Bill benefits. Additionally, tutorial assistance and reimbursement for one licensing or certification test reimbursement are available under the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

NOTE: If an individual is eligible for the Post 9/11 GI Bill as well as other GI Bill benefits, he or she will be required to make an **irrevocable choice** of which benefit to receive. Individuals who were previously eligible for the Montgomery GI BILL-Active Duty (MGIB-AD, Chapter 30), Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR, Chapter 1606), or the Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP, Chapter 1607) may continue to receive benefits for approved programs not offered by degree-granting institutions. These programs include flight, correspondence, apprenticeship/on-the-job training, preparatory courses, and national tests. Individuals in these programs will be paid as if they are still receiving benefits under Chapters 30, 1606, and 1607.

When will benefits be paid?

The Post-9/11 GI Bill is effective for training on or after August 1, 2009.

What is the eligibility period?

The period of eligibility for the Post 9/11 GI Bill ends 15 years from the date of the last discharge or release from active duty of at least:

- 90 consecutive days
- 30 days but less than 90 days if released for a service-connected disability

Or: 15 years from the date of discharge for the last period of service used to meet the minimum service requirements of 90 aggregate days of service.

Additional Fact Sheets are available on specific aspects of the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

For more information, visit the VA GI Bill Website at <http://www.gibill.va.gov>,

or call toll-free 1-888-GIBILL-1 (1-888-442-4551).

Post-9/11 GI Bill: Yellow Ribbon Program

What is the Yellow Ribbon Program?

The Yellow Ribbon GI Education Enhancement Program (Yellow Ribbon Program) is a provision of the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008. This program allows institutions of higher learning (degree-granting institutions) in the United States to voluntarily enter into an agreement with VA to fund tuition and fee expenses that exceed the highest public in-state undergraduate tuition rate. The institution can contribute a specified dollar amount of those expenses and VA will match the same amount as the institution not to exceed 50% of the difference.

Participating schools agree to:

- Provide contributions to eligible individuals who apply for the Yellow Ribbon Program on a first-come, first-served basis, regardless of the rate at which the individual is pursuing training in any given academic year
- Provide contributions during the current academic year and all subsequent academic years in which the institution is participating in the Yellow Ribbon Program and the student maintains satisfactory progress, conduct, and attendance
- Make contributions toward the program on behalf of the individual in the form of a grant, scholarship, etc;
- State the dollar amount that will be contributed for each participant during the academic year
- State the maximum number of individuals for whom contributions will be made in any given academic year.

Who is eligible?

Only individuals entitled to the maximum benefit rate (based on service requirements) may receive this funding. Active duty members and spouses of active duty members eligible for Transfer of Entitlement are **not** eligible as their tuition and fees are paid in full. An individual may be eligible if s/he:

- Served an aggregate period of active duty after September 10, 2001, of at least 36 months
- Were honorably discharged from active duty for a service-connected disability and served 30 continuous days after September 10, 2001
- Is a dependent eligible for Transfer of Entitlement under the Post-9/11 GI Bill based on an individual's service under the eligibility criteria listed above

How does the Yellow Ribbon Program benefit a participant?

The Post-9/11 GI Bill pays up to the highest public, in-state undergraduate tuition and fees. A participant may have tuition and fees that exceed that amount if s/he is attending a private institution, graduate school or attending in an out-of-state status. If s/he is enrolled at a Yellow Ribbon participating institution and the tuition and fees exceed the highest public, in-state undergraduate tuition or fees, additional funds may be available for an education program without an additional charge to entitlement. Institutions that voluntarily enter into a Yellow Ribbon Agreement with VA choose the amount of tuition and fees that will be contributed. VA will match that amount and issue payment directly to the institution.

When will benefits be paid?

Benefits are payable for training pursued on or after August 1, 2009. No payments can be made under this program for training pursued before that date.

Detailed information about the Yellow Ribbon program – for individuals and participating institutions – can be found at http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/CH33/Yellow_ribbon.htm.

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