

VA Health Care for Combat Veterans Extended!

Eligibility for VA health care for recent combat vets has been extended from two to five years. If you haven't already, enroll at the Iowa City VA with a copy of your DD-214. For more information, click [here](#).

GI Bill changed for Reservists

Several changes have been made for reservists in the GI Bill for 2008. Click [here](#) for more details.

SVA Summer Conference

The Student Veterans of America will be hosting a national conference on June 11-13, 2008. For information on attending as a representative of the UIVA, contact John Mikelson on Facebook or Room 203 in the Communications Center.

VA Home Loan Seminar

Date: Monday, March 31, 2008

Time: 7:00pm - 10:00pm

Location: American Legion Post #17

Street: 3016 Muscatine Ave

City/Town: Iowa City, IA

Phone: 319 354 7501

Email: jessicagreving@yahoo.com

Pre-registered attendees receive a coupon for \$100 off closing costs with a mortgage obtained through Residential Mortgage Network, Inc. Credit given at time of closing. This event is on Facebook.

OPINION: How the IA Legislature failed Iowa's returning Veterans

By Aaron Schlumbohm

The bills that passed out of committee this month in the IA legislature represent all the bills that will be considered this legislative session, and none were high priority for the UIVA. The veterans' lottery did make it out of committee, but this had been lower priority than improvements to state education benefits.

Legislative leaders decided not to join IL, WI, MN, MO, and many other states that have taken initiative in redressing federal shortcomings of education benefits for vets by creating state GI Bills.

Instead they pushed forward a bill that provides a one-time payment of \$750 to veterans working on their first undergraduate degree who have no remaining education benefits. That's one payment that's 68% of one month's GI Bill payment. And this will help maybe 7 or 8 people in the state of IA. Who is this for? How many vets exhaust 36 months of payments and with nothing to show for it? And for those who do, how much will this actually help them? It's kind of insulting really. If I wanted to make a bill that would make it look like I was helping returning veterans but without actually helping anyone, this is what I would propose. This bill will never, ever help me. I will graduate and have federal benefits left over, and plenty of student debt (though less than an average civilian student). And when I do graduate, I may end up going where the money is to take care of that debt despite the strong ties that brought me back here to attend college. Something for the legislature to think about when they bemoan the "brain drain" problem Iowa faces.

The lottery bill has been proposed before and defeated. If it passes this time, its proceeds will go towards state veterans programs, which is good. But I'm going to guess that most of these programs are designed to help older veterans, so OIF/OEF vets issues are unlikely to benefit much. With respect, these generations of veterans are on the way out, while OIF/OEF vets are still coming off the line. We just aren't represented the way they are, with organizations like the American Legion and the VFW that have an agenda that isn't as inclusive for the next generation of veteran.

In this Issue...

OIF/OEF Vet Updates	1
OPINION on Leg	1
GI Bill Facts	2
New GI Bill Proposal	2
UIVA Memo to Provost	3

From the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America; link [here](#).

A New GI Bill

*Rewarding our Troops, Rebuilding our Military
January 2008*

□ Known as the “Servicemen’s Readjustment Act,” the World War II GI Bill made higher education affordable for eight million veterans.

- The original GI Bill, which expired in 1956, covered tuition, fees, and books, and gave veterans a living stipend while they were at school.
- Presidents Gerald Ford and George H.W. Bush, Senators Bob Dole and Patrick Moynihan, and authors Norman Mailer and Frank McCourt all used the GI Bill.
- The GI Bill helped reinvent America after a half-decade of war; a 1988 Congressional study found that every dollar spent on educational benefits under the original GI Bill added seven dollars to the national economy in terms of productivity, consumer spending and tax revenue.

□ The current educational benefits offered to veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan are much lower than the original GI Bill.

- Today, after contributing a nonrefundable contribution from their first military paychecks, troops can receive a total of about \$39,600 towards their education.
- Unfortunately, this covers only 60-70% of the average cost of four years at a public college or university, or less than two years at a typical private college.
- National Guardsmen and Reservists, including those who have served multiple combat tours, only receive a fraction of the benefits offered to active-duty service members.
- There are also considerable delays in receiving benefits; more than 118,000 VA education claims are waiting to be processed.
- Although 95% of veterans pay a nonrefundable \$1,200 contribution, only 8% of veterans use their whole benefit and 30% of veterans don’t use their GI Bill at all. These veterans have contributed \$230 million to the national treasury, but received nothing in return.
- About 300,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have used some part of their GI Bill.

□ Rather than continuing to lower recruitment standards and spend billions in bonuses, a renewed GI Bill is the practical answer to the military’s troop shortage and would encourage high-aptitude young people to join the military.

- The GI Bill is the military’s single most effective recruitment tool; the number one reason civilians join the military is to get money for college.
- We spend \$4 billion a year on recruiting, but even with this investment, there have been serious problems getting enough high-caliber enlistees.
- Defense Secretary Gates has recommended “a total increase in the two services of 92,000 soldiers and Marines over the next five years -- 65,000 soldiers and 27,000 Marines.” This planned expansion will raise annual recruitment goals by 13 percent.¹

Facts are from Military.com story available [here](#).

Senator Webb’s Amazing 21st Century GI Bill

Webb reintroduced his bill, the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act ([S. 22](#)), last week with changes that attracted strong bipartisan support

His enhanced GI Bill would be available to any member, active or reserve, who has served at least three months on active duty since Sept. 11, 2001. The level of benefits would be tied to length of service. The \$1200 member buy-in under the current Montgomery GI Bill would be returned.

Maximum benefits, earned for 36 months' active duty, would cover tuition for up to four years at a level to match tuition at the most expensive in-state public school. The average across states is about \$1900 a month. MGIB pays \$1100.

Webb's bill also would pay a monthly stipend to cover living expenses. The stipend would reflect local housing costs near school and would be set to equal military Basic Allowance for Housing for married enlisted in grade E-5.

A feature would encourage private colleges to make their schools affordable to veterans. Schools that agree to pay half of their tuition in excess of the most costly state schools would see the government cover the remaining half. Thus academically qualified veterans could attend some of the best schools in the country.

Lobbying UI Administration

The UIVA recently sent a memo to the UI Provost's office regarding veterans' roles on campus and improvements that could be made to student veteran services:

The University of Iowa veterans Association would like to thank you for your past support in giving us space on campus to provide a meeting space and peer counseling area. Our numbers have grown in the last 3 years to nearly 300 and we expect our numbers to continue to increase. Veterans are a valued resource to the university, this community, and to the State of Iowa. In a reflection of maturity and work ethic developed in service to this country, veterans are dedicated to the community we live in. UI veterans have earned millions of dollars of federal benefits to the University and Johnson County. There are 289 veterans on this campus receiving veterans' benefits, bringing in close to 3.5 million dollars to Iowa City and paying over 1.2 million dollars in tuition. We are a diverse population of students, and a quarter of us on campus are women. Ninety percent are residents of Iowa. Additionally, there are 600 veterans in nearby Kirkwood programs, many of whom will choose to finish their degree at The University of Iowa.

Iowa City has a number of advantages specific to veterans returning to school. The VA Hospital is an important presence adjacent to campus. A number of important veterans groups and service organizations are active in the area. The University of Iowa is a vet-friendly campus with an active student group for veterans as well as an affiliated Vet Center to assist veterans returning to school. The University of Iowa Veterans Association is the recipient of several student organization awards. The group is active on campus, in the community, and across the state as well as on the national level through the Student Veterans of America. UIVA participation in the formation of the SVA has led to UI becoming a mid-west regional center for that group with the UIVA connecting campus veteran groups throughout the Midwest.

In order to capitalize on the many attractions of UI to veterans as prospective students, and to better serve the veterans already on campus, we ask the University to take several steps to assist in the transition from military service to student life. We are asking that UI

- 1) Continue to provide the UIVA and the Vet Center with office space. We are a land grant institution and have the responsibility to support our military and our veterans. The Iowa Memorial Union is a building dedicated to fallen American service men and women from Iowa.
- 2) Provide a full time staff advisor to the Vet Center to support veteran transition.
- 3) Provide a Veteran, Reserve and National Guard scholarship for book costs of up to \$500 a semester.
- 4) Standardized admission of undergrad vets with maximum ROTC and ACE credit recommendations for advance standing credit from military experience to replace what our members feel is an uneven process currently in place.
- 5) Waive the application fee and application deadlines for veterans.
- 6) Create a transition seminar for veterans, putting them face to face with each other and providing information to help them succeed with the support of volunteer faculty mentors.

The UIVA feels its active role on and off campus, our members prior service to this country, and the group's growing potential justify these improvements. U of I will be a premier institution for veteran enrollment. We are already seen within our peer group as a benchmark institution for veterans' services. We are requesting that the administration share our commitment to our Iowa veterans and service members. We would like to meet with you to discuss the improvements to our veteran population.

[**UIVA HOMEPAGE**](#)