



# THE AMERICAN LEGION GUIDE TO VETERANS EDUCATION BENEFITS

**GI BILL**

**MY**



POST 9/11 GI BILL ■ MONTGOMERY GI BILL ■ MONTGOMERY GI BILL-SELECTED RESERVE ■ RESERVE EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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THE AMERICAN LEGION GUIDE TO VETERANS EDUCATION BENEFITS



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The American Legion's online resource for the GI Bill and more.



## THE AMERICAN LEGION AND THE GI BILL'S EVOLUTION

The American Legion etched a permanent place in history in 1944. That year, Legionnaires ushered into law the Servicemen's Readjustment Act – better known as the GI Bill. Since then, millions of veterans have received free or discounted higher education benefits. So effective was the GI Bill, it is often credited for spurring more than 50 years of economic prosperity across the nation.

As the decades unfolded, however, the benefit fell out of pace with the changing times. The GI Bill was no longer covering fast-rising tuition costs. In some communities, it barely covered transportation cost to and from campus. National Guard and Reserve veterans were not receiving the same GI Bill benefits as those who had served in the active-duty branches, regardless of their combat experiences in places like Iraq

and Afghanistan. Nearly 25 years removed from its last major overhaul, it was no longer your grandfather's GI Bill.

## EVERYTHING CHANGED LAST SUMMER.

The American Legion and Congress had worked together for more than three years to overhaul the federal veterans' education benefits package, including elimination of a \$1,200 "buy-in" for service personnel and extending the time span a veteran has to use the benefit after discharge.

The Post 9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Act was signed into law on June 30, 2008, and was scheduled for implementation in Aug. 1, 2009. Four different education programs will soon exist: the Post 9/11 GI Bill, the Montgomery GI Bill, the Montgomery GI Bill/Selected Reserve and the Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP).

This publication is designed to help veterans understand the key points of these various federal benefits.

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# THE POST 9/11 GI BILL (U.S. CODE, TITLE 38, CHAPTER 33)

On June 30, 2008, the Post 9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Act became law. The new GI Bill – cast as a GI Bill for the 21st Century – provides many changes and improvements to the Montgomery GI Bill. However, the new GI Bill has also created a great deal of confusion for veterans, military personnel and college campus veterans' coordinators.

## WHEN DOES IT TAKE EFFECT?

Provisions of the Post 9/11 GI Bill are scheduled to take effect Aug. 1, 2009.

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

- Active-duty members of the U.S. Armed Forces
- Honorably discharged veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces with at least 90 aggregate days of active-duty service since Sept. 10, 2001
- Veterans who performed at least 30 days of continuous active-duty service after Sept. 10, 2001, and were discharged due to a service-connected disability
- Veterans with at least 90 aggregate days of active-duty service who were released from the armed forces with service characterized as honorable and placed on the retired list, temporary disability retired list, or transferred to the Fleet Reserve or the Fleet Marine Corps Reserve

- Veterans honorably released after at least 90 aggregate dates of active-duty service for a reserve component
- Veterans discharged or released due to hardship, a condition that existed prior to service or a condition that interfered with duty

## HOW MANY MONTHS ARE COVERED?

Generally, the Post 9/11 GI Bill provides benefits for up to 36 months. Veterans are limited to a total of 48 months of combined VA education benefits. Veterans who transfer Montgomery GI Bill benefits to the Post 9/11 program are limited to the amount of months remaining from their Montgomery GI Bill benefit.

## WHAT IS THE WINDOW OF TIME TO USE IT?

Individuals are generally eligible for Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits for 15 years after the veteran's last day of active duty, following at least 90 continuous days of active duty.



### GI BILL FACT

**278:** Percent of increase of the cost of a four-year education at a public institution over the past 20 years.



## WHAT COSTS ARE COVERED?

- **Established charges**, like tuition and fees, based on the highest-cost full-time undergraduate training program at a state public institution of higher learning
- **A monthly housing allowance**, which is equivalent to the base housing allowance for an E-5 with dependents, calculated according to the cost of housing in the region where there student is enrolled (*Active-duty members are not eligible*)
- **A stipend** of up to \$1,000 per year is paid for books and supplies, provided proportionally by term – quarter, semester, trimester, etc. (*Active-duty members are not eligible*)

To receive 100 percent of the Post 9/11 GI Bill benefit, a veteran must have either served at least 36 months after Sept. 10, 2001, or 30 continuous days of active duty and discharged with a service-connected disability. The minimum benefit, 40 percent, is paid for those who served on active duty at least 90 days but less than six months. Other percentages of the benefit are applied based on the number of active-duty months served. (See chart at right.)

## WHAT KIND OF EDUCATION IS COVERED?

The Post 9/11 GI Bill only covers education at institutes of higher learning, such as state and public-private colleges and universities.

## BENEFIT PERCENTAGES

SERVICE REQUIREMENT*	PERCENTAGE OF MAXIMUM BENEFIT PAYABLE
36 months of service	100
At least 30 continuous days of active duty before discharge with a service-connected disability	100
30-36 months of service	90
24-30 months of service	80
18-24 months of service	70
12-18 months of service	60
6-12 months of service	50
90 days - 6 months of service	40

\* For individuals serving after 9/10/01.

The benefit may not be used for flight training, correspondence schools, vocational schools, apprentice programs, on-the-job training programs, national tests or online distance education programs.

The “**Yellow Ribbon Program**” allows certain institutes, like private colleges, to enter into agreements with VA to pay established education costs not covered by the Post 9/11 GI Bill. VA will match each additional dollar funded by the school, as long as the combined total does not exceed the full cost of the established charges. Only individuals entitled to the 100 percent benefit rate may use it.

### GI BILL FACT

**\$51 BILLION**

The amount spent by the federal government to send 8 million World War II veterans to school; the eventual return on that investment was \$353 billion.

## GI BILL FACT CELEBRITY BILLING

Celebrities who went to school on the GI Bill include Johnny Carson, Bill Cosby, Gene Hackman, Rod Steiger, Johnny Cash, Steve McQueen, Norman Mailer, Rod Serling, Harry Belafonte, Bob Dole, Norman Mailer, Clint Eastwood, Paul Newman, Gerald Ford and Henry Kissinger.

## WILL THE \$1,200 MONTGOMERY GI BILL BUY-IN BE REFUNDED FOR THOSE WHO QUALIFY AND SWITCH TO THE POST 9/11 BENEFIT?

A proportional amount of the \$1,200 contribution will be included with the last monthly housing allowance payment when the Post 9/11 benefit exhausts. Those who do not exhaust the Post 9/11 benefit will not receive a Montgomery GI Bill refund.

## WHAT ABOUT SWITCHING TO THE POST 9/11 GI BILL?

An individual can elect to irrevocably switch to the Post 9/11 GI Bill as long as he or she is eligible for it as of Aug. 1, 2009, and is:

- Eligible for either the Montgomery GI Bill (Chapter 30), the Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserve (Chapter 1606) or the

Reserve Educational Assistance Program (Chapter 1607)

- A member of the armed forces and making the basic \$1,200 contribution toward the Montgomery GI Bill benefit
- A member of the armed forces who previously declined to use Montgomery GI Bill benefits (Chapter 30)

## CAN THE BENEFIT BE TRANSFERRED TO OTHERS?

DoD may allow an individual to transfer Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits to one or more dependents if he or she has served at least six years and commits to serve an additional four years in the U.S. Armed Forces. DoD determines eligibility for those wishing to transfer GI Bill benefits and may impose additional requirements and limit the number of months that can be transferred.



## GI BILL FACT

**570:** The room occupied in 1943 by American Legion Past National Commander Harry Colmery at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C. During his stay, Colmery wrote the draft for the original GI Bill – in longhand – on hotel stationery. A plaque commemorates the room today.



# THE MONTGOMERY GI BILL – ACTIVE DUTY (U.S. CODE, TITLE 38, CHAPTER 30)



## GI BILL FACT

**17 MONTHS:**  
The average number of months of educational benefits used out of the 36 months provided.



## WHAT ARE THE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS OF THE MONTGOMERY GI BILL?

Individuals must have first enlisted on or after July 1, 1985, to use the Montgomery GI Bill, paid the \$1,200 contribution and served on active duty for a period equal to, or greater than, the initial enlistment period, and receive an honorable discharge.

## WHAT KIND OF EDUCATION PROGRAMS DOES THE MONTGOMERY GI BILL COVER?

- Classes that lead to college degrees
- Vocational programs that lead to degrees or certification
- Independent study programs, including on-line and Internet training
- Fifty-five percent of the cost of approved correspondence training
- On-the-job or apprentice training (75 percent for the first six months, 55 percent for the second six months and 35 percent for the remainder)

- Up to 60 percent of approved charges for flight training
- Up to \$2,000 per licensing or certification exam
- Entrepreneurship classes offered through the Small Business Development Center or the National Veterans Business Development Center
- Up to 60 percent of charges for courses defined as “high cost” or “high tech”

## HOW MUCH IS THE MONTHLY BENEFIT?

The monthly benefit for the Montgomery GI Bill is based on the type of training and length of service. A member of the armed forces can contribute “kickers” to add to the benefit over time.

## WHAT IS THE TIME LIMIT?

Typically, the time limit to use the Montgomery GI Bill is 10 years after discharge or 36 months, whichever comes first.

In 1984, Rep. G.V. “Sonny” Montgomery (D-Miss.), led the last major effort to overhaul the GI Bill. Known as the Montgomery GI Bill since then, it may be used while on active duty after serving 24 months or more, or after separation. It requires a \$1,200 buy-in, deducted from military pay, and includes a \$600 buy-up option to enhance the benefit.

# THE MONTGOMERY GI BILL – SELECTED RESERVE (U.S. CODE, TITLE 10, CHAPTER 1606)



## GI BILL FACT

**30:** Percentage of active-duty servicemembers who never use their veterans education benefits after leaving the military - although 95 percent of active-duty servicemembers sign up for the benefits (under the Montgomery GI Bill).



This educational benefit is for current members of the Army Reserve, Navy Reserve, Air Force Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Coast Guard Reserve, Army National Guard and Air National Guard who signed a six-year obligation to serve after June 30, 1985, or, if an officer, six years in addition to the original obligation.

## WHAT OTHER ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS ARE THERE?

In addition to current membership in the Selected Reserve or National Guard, an individual must also have completed initial Active Duty for Training, have a high-school diploma or equivalency certificate before applying for the GI Bill benefit and remain in good standing with his or her Selected Reserve or Guard unit.

## WHAT DOES THE PROGRAM PROVIDE?

Up to 36 months of education benefits are payable 14 years from the date of eligibility or until the individual leaves the Selected Reserves or Guard.

## WHAT KINDS OF EDUCATION QUALIFY?

The benefit may be used for college degree or certification programs, technical or vocational training, flight training, apprenticeship or on-the-job training, and correspondence courses. Non-credit, remedial and refresher courses may be approved under certain circumstances.

[www.gibill.va.gov/pamphlets/CH1606/CH1606\\_Pamphlet\\_General.htm](http://www.gibill.va.gov/pamphlets/CH1606/CH1606_Pamphlet_General.htm)

# RESERVE EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (U.S. CODE, TITLE 10, CHAPTER 1607)

## HOW MUCH DOES THE REAP BENEFIT PAY?

The benefit amount is based on a percentage of the Montgomery GI Bill (Chapter 30) benefit for a three-year enlistment or longer. Those who serve 90 days to a year of active duty, for instance, can receive 40 percent of the active-duty rate. Those who serve at least one year but less than two on active duty can receive 60 percent. Those who were mobilized for at least two continuous years of active duty or served multiple mobilizations totaling three years or more may be eligible for 80 percent of the active-duty rate. Reservists may use the \$600 Buy-Up Program to increase the benefit by up to an additional \$5,400.

## HOW MANY MONTHS OF EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS ARE PROVIDED?

Reservists may receive 36 months of benefits at their given rate under the REAP program. They may not receive more than 48 months of benefits collectively, using other VA education programs.

## WHAT IS THE TIME SPAN TO USE REAP BENEFITS?

Members of the Selected Reserve who were called up and fulfilled their REAP active-duty eligibility requirements can receive benefits for up to 10 years after separation.

Members must separate from the Selected Reserve, not the Individual Ready Reserve or Inactive National Guard, to maintain eligibility for the 10-year benefit period.

## WHAT EDUCATION PROGRAMS ARE COVERED?

All education programs under the Montgomery GI Bill are available under REAP, except national examination and testing reimbursements.

[www.gibill.va.gov/pamphlets/CH1607/REAP\\_FAQ.htm](http://www.gibill.va.gov/pamphlets/CH1607/REAP_FAQ.htm)

REAP was established in 2005 to provide education benefits to members of the Reserve components called or ordered to active duty in a time of war or national emergency, as declared by the president or Congress. Eligibility is determined by the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security. REAP benefits may not be received concurrently with any other GI Bill veterans education benefit.



### GI BILL FACT

7: Percentage of servicemembers separated from the military between 1997 and 2006 who used up all their education benefits within the Montgomery GI Bill's 10-year time limit.



# RESOURCES



## THE AMERICAN LEGION ECONOMIC DIVISION

The American Legion Economic Division is the organization's hub for veterans education benefits, including the GI Bill, along with business and career information.

### American Legion Economic Division

1608 K Street  
Washington, D.C. 20006

### Joe Sharpe, Deputy Director

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### Mark Walker, Assistant Director

[mwalker@legion.org](mailto:mwalker@legion.org)

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## WWW.MYGIBILL.ORG

Veteran education benefits are clarified and updated frequently on this site, launched on Veterans Day 2008.

## WWW.NEEDALIFT.ORG

The American Legion's comprehensive publication for education opportunities, "Need a Lift?", offers a wide range of scholarship and funding sources. The printed booklet is available by calling American Legion Emblem Sales at (888) 453-4466.

## WWW.GIBILL.VA.GOV

The Department of Veterans Affairs provides information about federal veterans education benefits and the ability to apply for benefits online.

## WWW.ACCESS.GPO.GOV/USCODE

Veterans education benefits can be found in Title 10 and Title 38 of U.S. Code.





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