

Statement of  
Dr. David L. Warren, President  
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities  
before the Subcommittee on Benefits  
Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
U. S. House of Representatives  
June 7, 2001

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee:

I am David Warren, president of the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. Our association represents almost one thousand independent institutions and higher education associations, located in every state, and offering a great diversity of educational opportunity. Our membership includes America's premier research universities, nationally known liberal arts colleges, comprehensive universities, faith based institutions, colleges for women and colleges for men, historically Black colleges, Hispanic serving institutions, and specialized and professional institutions. That educational diversity allows our member colleges to serve the diversity of America's students. For example, independent colleges enroll about the same percentage of Black and Hispanic students as do public four year colleges (17.9% vs. 18.1%); about the same percentage of our students come from families with incomes under \$30,000 a year (26.8% vs. 27.7%). I offer those comparisons to counter the widely held myth that independent institutions serve only wealth families.

I might note too, as we discuss funding levels for the Montgomery G.I. Bill, that half of all independent institutions charged less than \$13,688 during this past year, and that all independent institutions, including the handful whose \$25,000-plus tuitions catch the public attention, offer large amounts of aid from their own resources, to add to federal and state aid programs, so that the average annual grant total for full-time undergraduates now exceeds \$8,500.

We welcome and support this Committee's vision of moving educational benefits for military service back to the standard set by the first GI Bill, which paid the full tuition and living cost for veterans at whatever college or university they chose. The original GI Bill allowed veterans to pursue the educational alternative that best suited their individual talents and ambitions. The results for those individuals, and for the nation, were dramatic and positive.

Intended by its congressional authors primarily as a way for millions of veterans to readjust to civilian life, the GI Bill became a demonstration of the great benefits of opening higher education to students based on their talent and ambition, rather than their family circumstances. The great increases in economic productivity that resulted from providing higher education to a much larger percentage of the population than ever before, in any country, dramatically demonstrated the value of that kind of basic investment in human talent. The program paid for itself many times over in increased tax revenues based on the higher earnings of those educated veterans. But we also learned that the benefits were not only economic. Higher educational attainment also leads to greater civic involvement, improved health, and increased life expectancy. The broader commitment represented by federal student aid programs, that now encourage a majority of high school graduates to continue to further education, draws on the demonstrated value of such investments that we learned first from the original GI Bill.

The GI Bill also forever changed American higher education. The seriousness and focus of the veterans raised the standards for all students. A few education leaders had feared that a large mass of veterans would dilute educational quality and seriousness, but they quickly learned that the those veterans brought talent and experiences that enhanced education for all students.

Our colleges continue to welcome and value the enrollment of veterans. We know that they bring added maturity and seriousness to their studies. This is true of young people who begin their studies after an initial tour of duty in the military, with greater focus and a variety of experiences and skills. It is also true for veterans who have spent the

first half of their working lives in the service, and who seek educational credentials to allow them to enter a second career in teaching or business or some other field.

A number of our colleges have established special programs specifically to serve those mid-career veterans who look for a new career in teaching. Once prepared for the classroom, they make wonderful contributions to our elementary and secondary schools. Military veterans are a particularly important source of minority teachers, highly sought after by urban school districts.

Independent colleges and universities are also well represented among the Servicemembers' Opportunity Colleges (SOC). Those institutions make a special effort to recognize that veterans bring skills and training from their military experience that must be translated into the competencies and course credits of civilian education. Service members also commonly acquire course credits from several institutions as they move about during their years of military service. The SOC institutions work to combine those credits as completely and efficiently as possible. NAICU is pleased to be one of the sponsoring associations for the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges, and we are proud of the accomplishments of that valued organization.

We share this committee's concern that the Montgomery G.I. Bill has not fully lived up to its original purposes and promise. The fact that only half of our veterans make use of these educational benefits suggests a significant waste of human potential. We can be sure that a much larger percentage of our veterans could enhance their own productivity and achievement, by taking advantage of the opportunities of further education.

Obviously, an important problem has been that the educational benefit levels of the Montgomery G.I. Bill have not kept up with what it costs an institution to provide an advanced education. The increases contemplated in H.R. 1291 would bring those benefits to more realistic levels. The \$1,100 a month set for 2004 would cover the full tuition charges at many four year public institutions, and even at a substantial number of private colleges. And, I know that in the private college sector, those amounts would be supplemented by many institutions to make college study possible for the veterans using those Montgomery G.I. Bill benefits.

NAICU has joined other higher education associations, and the major veterans groups, in advocating that Montgomery G.I. Bill benefits be benchmarked at the annually updated tuition and fees for a commuter student at a public four-year college (this year, that would be \$9,229). I encourage the committee to press toward a benchmarking concept, to ensure that future Montgomery G.I. Bill benefit levels do not again slip well below the real costs for most veterans seeking higher education.

It may seem surprising for an association of independent colleges to support the average cost of public institutions as a benchmark. But we recognize this as a goal that might be achieved in the near future which would enhance the usefulness of veterans educational benefits at all institutions. And, I would note, that the tuition charges at many private colleges are not far from that benchmark number. This is particularly true for institutions that serve a large percentage of adult students, and which are also the most frequent choices of veterans within the independent college sector.

Benchmarking at that level would not restore veterans benefits to the effective levels of the original GI Bill following World War II. The goal of providing educational benefits for veterans that meet the full expenses of whichever college or university an individual veteran may choose is an important one, and we support that goal. We know that the benefits to our nation of that kind of educational investment would be repaid many times over, as it was with the original GI Bill.

But in this real world of hard choices, we believe that a benchmark that moves to reflect changing educational expenses is a concept that merits your serious consideration.

We also recognize that our nation benefits when our volunteer military force can attract talented young people who would enjoy and benefit from the experience of military service. Educational benefits are obviously an important incentive to recruitment for our military services, and a more talented and representative military enhances the security and well being of all citizens.

But from my perspective as an educator, I see the benefits of increasing our public investment in the education of

both our young people and those returning to the civilian workforce after a military career, as the most persuasive and obvious benefit of improvements in the Montgomery G.I. Bill. The pay off for such investments will be large and lasting. I compliment this committee on its commitment to making these Montgomery G.I. Bill improvements a reality.

Biographical statement for David L. Warren:

David L. Warren became president of the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU) in 1993, after nearly a decade as president of Ohio Wesleyan University.

A tireless crusader for America's private colleges and for increased financial aid funding for all college students, Dr. Warren is widely regarded as one of the most persuasive and influential voices for higher education within Washington, D.C. Beyond NAICU, he has orchestrated and led cooperative efforts with the other major higher education associations. He has co-chaired the National Campus Voter Registration Project which, again in 2000 as in 1996 and 1998, engaged the nation's campuses in the political and electoral process. He also has spearheaded the Student Aid Alliance, an ongoing campaign to expand student aid which has resulted in a 62 percent increase in the Pell Grant over the last five years.

The recipient of 11 honorary degrees and numerous other academic and civic awards, Dr. Warren has been described as "one of the most gifted leaders and creative thinkers in all of American higher education" by American Council on Education President Stanley O. Ikenberry. He also has been cited for his efforts "to restore proposed cuts in federal student aid, gain tax relief for college students and their families, and reduce intrusive and burdensome federal regulation of colleges" (Middlebury College), has been recognized as "a trusted and valued resource on educational policy issues for leaders in higher education, the United States Congress, and the White House" (University of New Haven), and has been saluted as "one of the most respected and effective leaders in American higher education" (Kentucky Wesleyan College).

Dr. Warren has been a leader in the national community service movement, as a member of the founding board of Campus Compact, and a member of its executive committee since 1986. In addition, while president of Ohio Wesleyan, he served as chair of a state task force that addressed state government reform, and was Governor Celeste's appointee as chairman of the Ohio Ethics Commission for two years.

Before becoming president of Ohio Wesleyan, Dr. Warren was the chief administrative officer of the City of New Haven, Conn., from 1982 to 1984. From 1978 to 1982, Dr. Warren held a variety of positions at Antioch University in Yellow Springs, Ohio, including senior vice president and university provost. From 1968 to 1976, he held administrative and faculty positions at Yale University, including assistant secretary for state and community relations, and executive director of Dwight Hall, a privately endowed center that provides Yale students with volunteer, work-study, and field-based learning opportunities.

Dr. Warren earned his bachelor's degree in English from Washington State University, where he graduated Phi Beta Kappa. Washington State recognized his accomplishments in 1991 by awarding him the Alumni Achievement Award for Distinguished Leadership. He earned master's degrees with honors in both divinity and urban studies from Yale University, and a doctorate in higher education administration from the University of Michigan, where in 1998 he received the Distinguished Alumnus Award from the university's Education Alumni Society. He also was a Fulbright Scholar in India and a Rockefeller Fellow at Yale.

The author of numerous articles on volunteerism, student activism, crisis management, and theology, his works have appeared in publications such as *Commonweal*, *Change*, and *Christianity and Crisis*. In addition, Dr. Warren has contributed chapters to books such as *New Futures: The Challenge of Managing Corporate Transitions* and *Current Perspectives on Social Problems*.

He and his wife, Ellen, have two sons and a daughter: Jamison (Duke 1995), Mackenzie (Northwestern 2000), and Katrin (Middlebury 2001).

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The National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities has received no federal grants or contracts within the past two fiscal years.