

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF VETERANS' PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS

TESTIMONY

ON

H.R. 1207 the Department of Veterans Affairs Work-Study Act of 2005

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman, members of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity. I am David Guzman, Legislative Director for the National Association of Veterans Program Administrators (NAVPA). With me is Faith DesLauriers, Chair of the NAVPA Legislative Committee. We appreciate this opportunity to address you today on veterans' educational issues. Our membership consists of concerned and dedicated veteran program administrators at the "*business end*" of the GI Bill, the colleges and universities across this great land of ours. The Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) and GI Bills before have intended to serve as recruiting and readjustment tools for those who served our country honorably and we are proud to be a part of the process that serves these dedicated Americans. Title 38 U.S.C. § 3485(a)(1)(B) outlines the Department of Veterans Affairs veteran student work-study program; however, the restrictions imposed are too limiting by not allowing veteran students to work at colleges and universities outside of the office of veterans' affairs. These restrictions therefore do not fully conform to the concept of providing work experience or enhancing jobs opportunities for veterans following graduation. Current legislation limits the extent of the VA work-study program by restricting where a veteran students that can be employed. This restriction has a limiting effect on the scope of substantive and relevant student work experience, especially at rural colleges where outside work opportunities are limited. Expansion of the VA student work-study program would compliment the *Jobs For Veterans Act* under PL 107-288, enhance the veterans' opportunity for job placement following college and assist veterans transition to the world of work following separation from the military and subsequent education or training at the institution of their choice thereby completing the readjustment process. NAVPA fully supports H. R. 1207 and urges this committee to recommend adoption of this bill that would allow veterans the opportunity to work in the college/university office of veterans affairs and/or administrative or academic departments, at the degree granting institution, in which the student is pursuing their academic credentials. I can say that my personal experience at Washington State University in rural Pullman, Washington begs that this program be expanded so that our veteran students are given the opportunity to

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experience real work in their discipline while they are learning. Many academic departments at our nations colleges and universities value the veterans military experience, maturity and work ethic. Academic faculty has asked our members if veterans could work in the labs and academic departments only to be turned away. Many veterans who have asked for work-study positions must turn down these opportunities because of the limits within the current legislation. Passage of HR 1207 would greatly expand job opportunity for veterans while costing very little, in fact, the payback in earnings for the veterans would return 7 (or more) times the investment as proven by the GI Bills of past eras. With regard to H. R. 717, to expand the scope of programs of education for which accelerated payments of educational assistance and exclude benefits payments under the MGIB from income or as a resource for purposes of determining eligibility for education grants or loans under any other provision of federal law. The federal methodology used to calculate need for student financial assistance requires institutions to take into account all forms of assistance received by the student to help pay educational costs. The MGIB benefit is considered in the needs assessment as a "resource" thus deducted from the total financial aid award or Cost of Attendance dollar-for-dollar. Additionally, not considered in this formula is the initial \$1,200 pay reduction service members had withheld from their basic pay to enroll in the MGIB at the onset of their initial service tour. Nor is there any consideration given for the years of military service, personal sacrifices, family separations, irregular duty hours and conditions, for the protections and freedoms afforded this nation. The MGIB is not like other resources, it is an earned benefit, one that we believe our nation owes the men and women who serve this county for putting their personal aspirations on hold to protect and defend our freedoms and one that should not be diminished by a standard formula that does not consider these sacrifices. These men and women should be afforded an opportunity to make the readjustment, earn an education or otherwise train for gainful employment without further sacrifice. NAVPA fully supports the proposed legislation in H. R. 745, *Veterans Self-Employment Act of 2005 that* will allow veterans more opportunity to use their veteran's educational benefits to better their opportunities in the world-of-work. We recognize that veterans mirror the American society and that not all veterans will pursue a college degree; therefore, expansion of the MGI B as provided for in these bills makes good sense and further enhances the readjustment concept and speaks highly of the value we, as Americans, place on those who serve in our military services.