

Amendment 2162 - To strike section 524, which restricts use of DOD tuition assistance funds.

Section 524 of the FY14 NDAA requires that schools participating in the Department of Defense (DOD) Tuition Assistance Program be eligible for funding under Title IV of the Higher Education Act. This will limit the ability of service members to use DOD tuition assistance at certain educational institutions.

In recent years, several steps have been taken to improve transparency, strengthen safeguards, and curb inappropriate recruiting practices of military and veteran students:

- The Improving Transparency of Education Opportunities for Veterans Act of 2012 (P.L. 112-249) improves the availability of information on institutions of higher learning and prohibits the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) from awarding bonuses to schools based on success in securing enrollments.
- Effective March 1, 2013, all institutions of higher education (both for- and non-profit) must have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to participate in the DOD Tuition Assistance Program. The MOU, among other things, seeks to end fraudulent and aggressive recruitment on military installations.
- On April 27, 2012, President Obama signed Executive Order 13607, which created “Principles of Excellence” at the VA, which are designed to help veterans and their families make informed choices when using the educational opportunities offered by the GI Bill. To date, more than 6,000 schools (both for- and non-profit) have signed the Principles of Excellence. Among other things, the Principles ensure that these students:
 - 1) receive a personalized form covering the total cost of an educational program, pre-enrollment program costs, student debt estimates, and financial aid options;
 - 2) an educational plan and counseling; and
 - 3) accreditation of all new programs prior to enrolling students.
- DOD and the VA are also currently working alongside the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), the Department of Education (ED), and the Department of Justice (DOJ) to create a centralized complaint to better protect military and veteran students.

Given these ample safeguards, it is both unnecessary and counterproductive to limit the educational opportunities of military and veteran students, as Section 524 would do.

Service members and veterans have earned the right to use their educational aid in a flexible manner that meets their needs and goals. The federal government should not further insert itself between military students and their preferred institutions of high education.

This amendment ensures that we maintain the promises we have made to our service members by affording them the ability to enhance their educational and professional development at the higher education institutions of their choice.