



That so many veterans go to for-profit schools concerns many veterans groups, because the schools have relatively low completion rates and among the highest student loan default rates in higher education. | Win McNamee/Getty Images

EDUCATION

Vets to Congress: Cut off for-profit colleges' incentive to recruit student veterans

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aggressively targeted by for-profit colleges.

Their new outlook follows nearly a decade of lobbying to alter the so-called 90/10 rule, which says for-profit colleges can't get more than 90 percent of their revenue from federal student aid. It doesn't count veterans and military service education benefits like the GI Bill as a part of that revenue. That gives for-profit colleges an incentive to aggressively market to veterans to stay afloat, the veterans say.

With Congress showing some promising signs of overhauling the Higher Education Act, the advocates hope a change will be included in any compromise worked out to reauthorize the law.

Although veterans issues historically draw bipartisan support — and win support in particular from the Republican base — the veterans groups have struggled to generate much GOP support over the years for their push to have veterans and military education benefits like the GI Bill counted the same as federal student aid in the calculation.

“People are paying attention,” said Lauren Augustine, vice president of government affairs with the Student Veterans of America, at a Capitol Hill press conference last week with representatives from six other veterans and military-family focused groups.

Adding momentum, the veterans advocates say, is the recent wave of closures of Argosy University and The Art Institutes campuses that affected more than 1,700 GI Bill recipients.

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“With every new school closure, with every new light shed on some of the bad practices that 90/10 allows, there's more attention and an urgent need to have a conversation, to include having a conversation with offices that previously even wouldn't talk to us about it,”

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the Hill” have faced passive pushback from some Republican offices. In this Congress, with new members from both parties, he said there’s been a “noticeable change.”

“We’re talking to folks that haven’t had to address this before and haven’t been pulled in the other direction for years,” Porter said.

The root of the issue dates to at least 2008, when Congress last overhauled HEA with the 90/10 requirement. The same year, it also passed the Post-9/11 GI Bill that greatly expanded the tuition, housing and books benefits afforded to Iraq- and Afghanistan-era veterans and their families. Since then, \$95 billion has been paid out under the program to nearly 2.1 million people, the Department of Veterans Affairs reports.

A 2010 investigation by the Senate HELP Committee, led by then-Chairman Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), drew attention to the amount of GI Bill money going to for-profit colleges. It found that nearly 37 percent of funds from the first year of the expanded GI Bill program went to for-profit schools, while less than a quarter of participants were enrolled in them.

A more recent analysis by the Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University found about 20 percent of GI Bill recipients go to a for-profit school, but about 50 percent of complaints filed by student veterans are about a for-profit institution. And a 2016 analysis by the Obama administration projected that if Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits were included in the calculation the same way as federal student aid funds, the number of schools that rely on federal funds for more than 90 percent of their revenue would have jumped from 17 to 200 for the 2013-14 academic year.

EDUCATION

DeVos launches investigation into college admissions scandal

By MICHAEL STRATFORD and NICOLE GAUDIANO

That so many veterans go to for-profit schools concerns many of the veterans groups, because the schools have relatively low completion rates and among the highest student loan default rates in higher education. Beyond that, the closures of for-profit colleges in recent years snared thousands of veterans.

Defenders of for-profits say they are popular because they are often tailored to the needs of adult learners with online offerings and flexible scheduling and provide career-minded

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update HEA by then-House Education Chairwoman Virginia Foxx (R-N.C.). The measure would have gotten rid of the 90/10 rule altogether. The bill was passed by the committee but never came up for a floor vote.

During a recent hearing, Rep. Bobby Scott (D-Va), the current committee chairman, said the committee is "strongly considering" changes to the rule that include altering how the military and GI Bill funds are included in the calculation.

Also this Congress, HELP Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) has said it's a priority to reauthorize HEA, and he wants to do it by the end of the year. He's been working behind closed doors with Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.), the committee's ranking Democrat, to work out a deal.

Still, updating HEA will be a heavy lift in a divided Congress — given the rule is just one area of polarization among the two parties when it comes to higher education policy.

While Murray historically has backed legislation that could change the calculation to what the veterans want, Alexander largely has been quiet on the issue. A white paper released by his committee staff last year did raise the question, however, of whether the 90/10 rule was an effective accountability measure.

"If the goal is to have a bipartisan consensus, this is not the way you get it," said Steve Gunderson, president of the Career Education Colleges and Universities, which represents for-profit colleges. "All they're proposing right now is ideas that would hurt our schools and veterans that want to go to our schools, so why would we support that?"

EDUCATION

DeVos defends proposed Special Olympics cut amid outcry

By NICOLE GAUDIANO

Tanya Ang, vice president of the group Veterans Education Success, said at least 36 veterans-focused groups back a change.

But one veterans group has the opposite view: Daniel Elkins, legislative director of the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States, said his group is concerned a change would lead to for-profit schools restricting veterans from enrolling because they

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If a veteran wants to go to a given school, “they might be prevented from going to that institution, and we feel that is not fair,” Elkins said.

At the veterans’ press conference, John Kamin, the education and credentialing policy associate at the American Legion, took a different view. He told the story of an Army reservist close to finishing his doctoral dissertation at an Argosy campus whose GI Bill benefits and college work were lost when his campus closed. Kamin said Argosy marketed itself as meeting the VA’s “Principles of Excellence” — a program in which participating schools agree to meet student-veteran-friendly criteria in exchange for the distinction.

“There’s no easy answers to how to prevent these things from happening, but there’s a simple step we can and should agree on,” Kamin said. “Shut down the 90/10 loophole so these schools stop targeting veterans.”

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