

# The Forever GI Bill – An Update Harry W. Colmery Educational Assistance Act of 2017



## Who was Harry W. Colmery?



- The Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017 is named after the original architect of the first GI Bill, which is often considered to be one of the most transformative pieces of legislation in the United States. Similarly, today's GI Bill, to be known hereafter as the "Colmery GI Bill", pays homage to this great American, and seeks to achieve even greater impact on the country.
- Considered the principal architect of the GI Bill, Colmery was a Kansas attorney, and served during World War I as an Army Air Service pilot. Colmery was a member of the American Legion, and determined—based upon his personal experiences of leaving the service with little help in planning his future—to improve the transition for World War II veterans.

## Harry W. Colmery (Continued)

- Holed up in Washington's Mayflower Hotel for five months, Colmery hand-wrote page after page of the GI Bill of 1944, which granted war veterans an array of rights and later served as a pattern for programs to aid Korean War and Vietnam War veterans.
- In the spirit of creating a better future for the next generation of veterans, with the opportunity to go to school as a right of service, this GI Bill is rightfully named after Harry W. Colmery.

# Today's Presentation

- Today's presentation will not deal with *all sections* of The Colmery Act, but those that affect School Certifying Officials in certifying veterans and other eligible persons.
- For complete text of The Colmery Act please go to: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/3218/text?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22hr+3218%22%5D%7D&r=1>
- For a summary of The Colmery Act go please go to : <https://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/FGIBSummaries.asp>

# Why is this bill also called “The Forever GI Bill®?”

- Section 112 of the Harry W. Colmery act eliminates the current 15 year time limitation to use the GI Bill® for new members of the Armed Forces.
- This provision takes effect immediately and applies to service members and dependents discharged on or after January 1, 2013.
- *Question – what if a service member was discharged before January 1, 2013?*
- *Question – does this mean a veteran or eligible person has unlimited entitlement and can use GI Bill® benefits “forever”?*

## Section 103

# Changes to the Yellow Ribbon Program

- Inclusion of Fry Scholarship Recipients and Purple Heart Recipients in the Yellow Ribbon Program
- This provision takes effect August 1, 2018

## Section 104

# Changes to the Yellow Ribbon Program

- This section extends Yellow Ribbon to student veterans enrolled in programs of education leading to a degree on a more than half-time basis *while on active duty*.
- This provision takes effect August 1, 2022

## Section 107

BAH based on the location of the campus where classes are located

- Requires VA to calculate the MHA (Monthly Housing Allowance) for CH 33 recipients based on the location of the campus where the individual physical attends the majority of their classes.
- VA – not the school – will do the calculation based on what is certified.
- MHA will no longer be based on the zip code of the “Main Campus”
- Applies to all new terms beginning on or after August 1, 2018.



## Section 107 continued

- What does VA mean by “Campus”?
- Any place an individual spends the majority of their time training for their program of education.
- This may include:
  - The actual campus of a school and its associated buildings
  - The physical location where a student is learning in a study abroad program
  - Any internship, externship or practicum site
  - A Student Teaching Site

## Section 107 continued

- Congress Representatives have indicated that the inclusion of these sites was desired by Congress.
- In some cases students will receive a higher MHA, but in others, students may receive a lower MHA (based on the circumstances).
- Students participating exclusively in Study Abroad programs overseas will receive the MHA rate for foreign schools (currently \$1,681.00).
- *Any examples from the SCOs (either higher or lower)?*

## Section 107 continued

- VA is currently updating their systems as a result of Section 107.
- The projected date for these system updates is July 2018.
- VA ONCE will still be used.
- MHA will be calculated based on zip code.
- Additional Facility Codes will not be issued to schools.
- What if a student attends two schools during the same term? Remember MHA will be based on the zip code where the student takes the *majority of their classes*.
- In a 50/50 tie (6 credits at school A and 6 credits at school B) the higher MHA is paid.

## Section 107 continued

- Schools will need to provide the SAA an updated copy of their catalog (or catalog addendum) each year which specifically listed each teaching site of their school with a complete address (to include zip code).
- We have already been doing this in Washington State, so this is nothing new.
- VA will be actively engaging with SAAs and schools to determine how schools can identify and provide the zip code information for internships, externships, practicum and student teaching sites. Stay tuned!

## Section 107 continued

- It will be the responsibility of the school to provide documentation during a Compliance Survey to verify where a course takes place. **Now** is the time to discuss this with your school on how you will do this!
- Most recent VA webinar (March 14, 2018) has an extensive section regarding this issue.
- [https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/resources/education\\_resources/school\\_certifying\\_officials/presentations.aspx](https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/resources/education_resources/school_certifying_officials/presentations.aspx)

## Section 202

- Affects Chapter 35 Students
- Reduces entitlement from 45 to 36 months
- Takes effect August 1, 2018

## Section 203

- Increases the monthly payment for Chapter 35 students by \$200.00 per month
- Takes effect October 1, 2018

## Section 303

- Priority Enrollment Data Collection
- Requires the VA to include this information on the GI Bill® Comparison Tool
- Recent email sent out from Michael Marks
- *Does this mean your school must give priority enrollment to veterans?* No – it just means that if you do – VA is required to put this information on the Comparison Tool so that students can make an informed decision on where to go to school.



## Section 304

- Reporting Fees for Schools
- Increases the Reporting Fee to \$16.00 per veteran
- **Requires** schools with 100 or more benefit recipients to establish a specific account tracking the fees. If you do not currently have an account set up – **now** is the time to work with your school to get this set up!
- All fees will be required to be used specifically for implementation of the GI Bill®.
- This provision takes effect August 1, 2018.

## Section 305

- SCO Training Requirements
- Currently in the development process
- VA may disapprove any course of education if training requirements are not met.
- All persons listed on the 22-8794 must receive the training.
- NOT OPTIONAL if you have 20 or more individuals using VA educational assistance!
- This provision takes effect August 1, 2018

## Section 305 continued

- Remember - a “covered educational institution” refer to a school that has enrolled 20 or more individuals using VA educational assistance
- If you have less than 20 individuals using VA educational assistance, the training is optional, but recommended.
- *Question – If your supervisor is just a “back up” , but is listed on the 22-8794, does she/he need to do the SCO Training?*

## Section 305 continued

- The plan is for the training to be done online and will include a basic overview of VA education benefits and SCO responsibilities
- Subsequent phases will include diagnostic testing for experienced SCOs, the results of which may be used to satisfy annual training requirements.
- This provision take effect August 1, 2018
- You are recommended to “scrub” your 22-8794 forms!

## Section 308

- School View of Remaining GI Bill® months of entitlement
- This section requires VA to make available to schools the ability to view the remaining benefit amount for each veteran attending that institution.
- Veterans can opt-out if they do not wish the school to have access to this information
- This provision takes effect August 1, 2018
- Stay tuned for implementation

# Resources

- SCO Handbook:
  - [https://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/docs/job\\_aids/SCO\\_Handbook.pdf](https://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/docs/job_aids/SCO_Handbook.pdf)
- SCO Hotline:
  - Contact your ELR for the number
- SAAs
  - WSAC/SAA (360) 753-7868 or 7821
  - Workforce SAA (360 709-4637)
- ELR
  - ELR.VBASEA@VA.gov

Questions?

