



ENLISTED ASSOCIATION OF THE NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED STATES

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Creating a Better GI Bill Calculator

Issue: Currently policymakers have little insight into the effectiveness of the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the return on investment it brings to the American people.

Background: Individual student-level data systems are found in many federal agencies, but federal data remains siloed, inhibiting the study of student outcomes. Even when agencies recognize the value of linking their data, there is no regularized infrastructure to facilitate such data sharing. This widespread problem manifests itself in the inability of the U.S. government to report on the basic outcomes and return on investment of the billions of dollars spent on the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

As a result, Veterans and their family members who often take advantage of GI Bill benefits all too often enroll in programs that have low student success rates and low ROI. In turn, Veterans spend precious time and scarce taxpayer dollars on pursuing a degree or credential that will not produce desired results.

Better data could be used immediately to improve the GI Bill Calculator, a tool designed by VA to help Student Veterans make the most of their education benefits. At present, the Calculator is not on par with the data presented in U.S. Department of Education's College Scorecard. The Scorecard displays a range of student outcomes, like the average salary of an institution's graduates, since it is linked with IRS data, or debt data derived from the office of Federal Student Aid. The Scorecard will soon be presenting student outcome data at the even more meaningful program level. Why, then, has the GI Bill Calculator fallen so far behind in the data that it presents?

Needed improvements can happen only by interweaving data that *already exists* in the VA with data already held by the Education department.

Recommendation:

The Enlisted Association of the National Guard recommends that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) form a partnership with the Department of Education (ED) to share its data with ED. We encourage VA and ED to determine points of granularity to best serve this purpose, but we suggest VA send:

- The name of the institution receiving benefits
- The program attended
- How much benefit used
- Age and rank, if a Veteran
- Whether it is a Veteran or their family using Post-9/11 GI Bill Dollars

The linking of data between these agencies will allow the federal government to calculate the ROI of every Post-9/11 GI Bill dollar at the degree and program level. This will inform better public policy and generate an improved GI Bill Calculator that is relevant to every Student Veteran who is considering higher education, boosting the value of the Post-9/11 GI Bill and saving the American taxpayer millions annually.