

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Washington, D.C. - Today, The Veterans Education Project (VEP) is calling for the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to release more information surrounding the recent audit, "VA's Oversight of State Approving Agency Program Monitoring for Post-9/11 GI Bill Students." VEP is asking for OIG to disaggregate the statistics surrounding the "improper payments" so that the root problem of this very important issue can be identified.

Following the definition established by OMB guidance of "improper payments," an improper payment is defined as "any payment that was made to an ineligible recipient. In addition, when an agency's review is unable to discern whether a payment was proper as a result of *insufficient or a lack of documentation, this payment must also be considered an improper payment.*" New programs innovating more quickly than a state approving agent's ability to review is no indication that these programs are a disservice to Student Veterans, or undeserving of Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. Since Student Veterans are often drawn to programs that are innovating and in need of special review and consideration, it is important to disaggregate the statistics surrounding the improper payments in order to identify whether these programs are failing their students academically, or if it is simply that the state approving agency hasn't had the time or resources to properly review the program.

It is evident that both the Veterans Benefits Administration and state approving agencies are not practicing sufficient oversight of Post-9/11 GI Bill eligible programs, and much reform is necessary in order to safeguard the benefits of Student Veterans. The Executive Director of VEP, Daniel Elkins, said, "It is just as important to protect the educational careers of Student Veterans from predatory schools as it is to protect them from losing their benefits because of an under resourced government agency."

VEP would like to be able to provide recommendations to both the SAAs and VBA on best practices moving forward, but in order to do so the following questions need clarification from OIG:

1. How many improper payments were categorized as such because of the bureaucratic failings on the part of state approving agencies;
2. How many improper payments were categorized as such because of compliance problems, such as lack of documentation;
3. How many of these improper payments were made to non-degree granting programs;
4. How many of these improper payments were made to degree-granting programs; and,
5. How many of these improper payments were categorized as such because of poor academic quality?

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