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Captain's Call

The Navy Specifies Benefits and Guidelines For New GI-Bill.

The chief of Naval Personnel announced on June 23, specific guidance detailing eligibility and benefits, including transferability for the Post-9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Act, or GI Bill.

The new GI Bill supporting veterans' education (signed into law June 2008) has the potential to make advanced education more affordable to Sailors and their families. Sailors should consider GI Bill eligibility when planning their Navy career and family education needs.

The new GI Bill also includes the provision for members of the Armed Forces to transfer benefits to a spouse and/or their children, and is expected to improve both recruiting and retention for the Navy's total force. The Bill becomes effective August 1, but no benefits will be paid under the new program for training or education pursued prior to this date. The Department of Veterans Affairs will make final determination of eligibility for benefits under this program.

General eligibility criteria requires service members to have total qualifying active duty service – on or after Sept. 11, 2001 – of no less than 90 days and up to 36 months or more, or: at least 30 days of continuous, active duty service if discharged sooner, due to a service-related disability. The member must receive an honorable discharge at the conclusion of service.

Qualifying active duty service is defined as: active duty served in the established components of the Navy, or for selected Reserve members, time served under orders to active duty in support of contingency operations.

Members who have completed a minimum of 36 months combined, qualifying service are generally entitled to 100 percent of the benefit under the new program. Lesser amounts of total qualifying service are prorated down to a 40 percent entitlement, for 90 days of qualifying service.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill is non-contributory – it doesn't require a "buy-in". Members eligible for either the current Montgomery GI Bill, or Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP), and also qualified for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, may elect to convert remaining entitlement under those programs to the new program.

Members have 15 years from the date of their last discharge or separation from active duty of 90 days or longer, to use their entitlement under the new GI Bill.

Payment for tuition and fees can not exceed the highest established rate for in-state, undergraduate studies at a public institution of higher learning (IHL) in the state in which the member is attending school. Tuition and fees are paid directly to the IHL. For Sailors no longer on active duty, a monthly stipend for housing (established at the E-5 with dependents allowance rate) is available based on the zip code in which the Sailor is attending school. Reimbursement for books, supplies and equipment is payable to the Sailor, up to \$1,000 per school year. Reimbursement for one licensing or certification test is also available, but mustn't exceed a total of \$2,000.

Members of the Armed Forces (active duty and selected Reserves) can transfer the benefits to family members. All – or a portion – of the service member's remaining entitlement may be transferred to their spouse, eligible children, or combination of both, provided the member agrees to serve four additional years in the Armed Forces from the date they are eligible and elect to transfer. Only family members listed in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System are eligible to receive transferred benefits. The ability to transfer entitlement to dependents is effective August 1.

Service members considering retiring very soon, must note that the option to transfer entitlement will be lost, if the retirement date is prior August 1, 2009.

Further fine points and instructions read NAVADMIN 187-09 and check our latest article: https://navcms.news.navy.mil/search/display.asp?story_id=46640