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*Captain's Call*

Post 9/11 GI Bill Benefits Available to Navy Members

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 Post-9/11 GI Bill is a significant benefit that provides not only tuition and fees for college, but may also include funding for books, supplies and a monthly stipend that may be used to offset living expenses. 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 effective date for the Post-9/11 GI Bill entitlement is August 1, and no benefits will be paid under the new program for training or education pursued prior to this date. The Department of Veterans Affairs is responsible for 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 between 90 days and 36 months or more, or: at least 30 days of continuous, active duty service if discharged sooner, due to a service-connected 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 regular component of the Navy, or for selected Reserve members, time served under orders to active duty in support of contingency operations, i.e. mobilization.

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 aggregate qualifying service are prorated down to a 40 percent entitlement, for 90 days of qualifying service.

For Naval Academy graduates and Navy ROTC scholarship recipients, the statutory minimum active duty service requirement for these programs does not count toward qualifying active duty. Only time served after completion of the service obligation will be considered as qualifying active duty service.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill is non-contributory, it does not require a buy-in. Members eligible for either the current Montgomery GI Bill, or Reserve Educational Assistance Program, 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 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.

Of significant importance to service members considering retiring within the next several months, is the option to transfer entitlement will be lost if the retirement date is prior to Aug. 1.

For more details, read NAVADMIN 187-09.