

Hanna Supports Passage of House Veterans' Bills

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The House of Representatives today passed legislation to improve the lives of Upstate New York veterans through expanding funding for education and allowing disabled veterans a cost of living increase. U.S. Rep. Richard Hanna is a co-sponsor of these two bills.

“To serve one’s country in uniform is one of the most noble and selfless acts available to man, particularly during times of war,” Hanna said. “We owe it to our veterans to keep our promises and assist them after completing their honorable service.”

“These pieces of legislation will help Upstate New York veterans support themselves and their families during fragile economic times, and allow them to obtain education that will help them contribute and thrive in our economy moving forward.”

“I urge the Senate to approve these bills without delay so that President Obama may sign them before Memorial Day.”

About the bills:

H.R. 1407 – The Veterans’ Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2011 would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) to increase, as of December 1, 2011, the rates of veterans’ disability compensation, additional compensation for dependents, the clothing allowance for certain disabled veterans, and dependency and indemnity compensation for surviving spouses and children. Cost of living increases would be tied to the Consumer Price Index in the same manner that Social Security benefits currently are. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that the bill would increase spending by less than \$500,000 over ten years, relative to CBO’s baseline projections. This estimate assumes that the cost of living adjustment effective on December 1, 2011, would be 1.1 percent.

H.R. 1383 – The Restoring GI Bill Fairness Act of 2011 would temporarily authorize the VA to cover tuition and fees for veterans attending non-public and training educational institutions that

have a cost exceeding \$17,500 a year, to avoid a spike in some Upstate New York veterans' out-of-pocket education costs.###

The Post-9/11 GI Bill was signed into law in 2008 and became effective in 2009. Under this program, the VA would pay 100 percent of the maximum in-state undergraduate tuition and fees on behalf of a veteran with at least three years of active duty service after September 11, 2001. The maximum payment would apply to veterans attending both public and private institutions of higher learning. Based on a state rate formula, VA made tuition and fee payments in excess of \$20,000 per school year for veterans attending some private institutions, including in New York.##

However, the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act which was enacted in January 2011 made several changes to the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Those changes included a reduction of tuition and fee payments for veterans attending non-public institutions to an annual maximum of \$17,500 effective August 1, 2011. A cap of \$17,500 per year would mean that some veterans attending non-public schools in New York will see their tuition and fees payments from the VA reduced. Reducing tuition and fee payments would unduly force veterans in New York to rely on loans, grants, or additional employment income.

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