

Chairman Daniel K. Akaka

OPENING STATEMENT

Implementation of the New Post-9/11 G.I. Bill – Looking Back and Moving Forward  
April 21, 2010

Today, we will review the implementation of the new Post-9/11 G.I. Bill. As one of only three current Senators who received benefits under the original G.I. Bill after World War II, I know firsthand the value of this program. My life was changed by the opportunity to get an education with the benefits that I earned, and I am very grateful for that chance.

That is why I was so pleased to join Senator Webb in cosponsoring the bill that created this important new education benefit which became effective on August 1, 2009.

Since the program began, the Committee has been actively monitoring the implementation of the new benefits. I thank both VA and DOD for the cooperation they have shown to Committee staff during this oversight work. There are significant and complex issues relating to the new benefit package. There are also substantial issues relating to the delivery of benefits to those who have served.

This morning, we will be exploring what problems have been encountered to date and how they were addressed. We will also focus on what needs to be done to ensure that benefits are delivered in a timely and accurate way. In addition to representatives from VA and DOD, a number of stakeholders will also be joining us to share their experiences and the issues they have encountered.

There is much to do to make this program as good as it can be. It is time to begin that work. In that vein, I plan, before Memorial Day, to introduce legislation that will serve as a starting point for the discussion about how the program should be changed. In my view, it is imperative that we all work together to address the issues involved – which today's witnesses will discuss in further detail. It is also important that we not take a piecemeal approach to whatever issues and fixes we identify, but rather move forward in a comprehensive, considered, and deliberate way. Today we begin that process.

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