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An Independent Nonprofit Aerospace Organization

**Air Force Association Written Testimony  
United States Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs**

Chairman Isakson and Ranking Member Blumenthal,

The Air Force Association thanks you for your support of the Veterans of the Air Force, their families and survivors.

We are grateful for your unwavering commitment to the men and women who have defended our nation, and appreciate the priority Congress has given Veterans issues in the past decade. We acknowledge the increasingly difficult budget choices before you in these times. We also appreciate this opportunity to give the Air Force Association's views on the following matters.

Reserve Component on Medical Hold:

Members of the National Guard or Reserve who are disabled on active duty orders and receiving medical care (this is called "medical hold" status), should not lose eligibility for Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits.

Currently, when a Guard or Reserve service member is injured or wounded in a combat theatre, the member transitions on orders to a medical hold status. This stops accrual of active duty time that would count towards Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits, and even if the member returns to service, none of the time spent in medical hold qualifies.

AFA believes fixing this oversight in current statute would allow all service members to continue to accrue the educational benefits earned in service while receiving medical care from the Department of Defense (DoD).

Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC)

Recommendations:

The MCRMC recommends a number of steps towards reducing redundancy in GI Bill programs. AFA generally supports these recommendations, as long as those already pursuing an education plan are allowed to finish their courses, and service members who are using Montgomery GI Bill and other education benefits are grandfathered with those benefits.

AFA also supports the MCRMC recommendation to increase the eligibility requirements for transferring Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to 10 years of service, and the sunset on housing stipend for dependents as long as those already under contract are grandfathered into those contracts.

The MCRMC recommended DoD track the education levels of service members leaving the service, as well as the education levels of service members who transfer their Post-9/11GI Bill to their dependents. It also recommended the VA collect information related to: course completion rates, course dropout rates, course failure rates, certificates and degrees being pursued, and employment rates after graduation, including that information in an annual report to the Congress. AFA agrees to this tracking as well as the recommendation to better prepare service members for transition to civilian life by expanding education and granting states more flexibility to administer state grants programs.

DoD Legislative Proposals:

AFA supports DoD's proposals giving Service Secretaries greater flexibility to test and evaluate alternative career retention options under the Career Intermission Pilot Programs, to bolster reemployment rights of those in the Reserve Component and confidential reporting in sexual assault cases.

Thank you again for your support of our force, and for the opportunity to offer this testimony from the Air Force Association.

Scott Van Cleef  
Chairman of the Board  
Air Force Association