



**HOUSE ARMED SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL
JOHN McHUGH, NEW YORK
CHAIRMAN**

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
September 27, 2006

Contact: Communications Office (HASC), 202-225-2539
Brynn Barnett (McHugh), 202-225-4611
Brooke Adams (VAC) 202-225-3664

**Chairmen McHugh and Boozman Assess Educational Benefits
for Selected Reserves**

Joint House Armed Services and Veterans' Affairs Subcommittees Receive Testimony on Expanded Educational Benefits for Selected Reserves under the auspices of the Montgomery G.I. Bill

Washington, D.C. -- Today, the Military Personnel Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee and the Economic Opportunity Subcommittee of the Veterans' Affairs Committee held a joint hearing to discuss expanded educational benefits for members of the Selected Reserves.

Military Personnel Subcommittee Chairman John McHugh (R-NY) who opened the hearing said, "Our discussion today is an important step in the process of making improvements to the education programs that serve our Reserve forces. Reservists and Guardsmen are performing important roles in the war on terror and are making the same sacrifices as our active duty members. There is no group that deserves a robust G.I. Bill more than the members of the Reserve components and the National Guard who have so expertly and gallantly stepped up and confronted our enemies across the globe."

Representative John Boozman (R-AR) who chairs the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity also spoke about the importance of holding the hearing today and the impact education policies have on national defense policies. In opening remarks, he said that "while benefits such as the GI Bill

directly benefit America's active duty personnel and veterans, such programs serve a larger national policy that both protects us militarily and therefore improves the security of America."

Senator Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) testifying before the committee members, said that when the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) was signed into law, few members of the Selected Reserve were mobilized. However, since September 11, 2001, "more than 500,000 members of the National Guard and Reserve have been called up and more than 70,000 have pulled two or more tours of duty."

Senator Lincoln highlighted the difference between active-duty and Selected Reserve educational benefits. "...Active-duty service-members have up to ten years after their separation of service to utilize their MGIB benefits, while members of the Selected Reserve must forfeit all of the educational benefits they have earned once they separate from the Selected Reserve," she said.

Responding to a question posed by Chairman McHugh about the importance of retention as an aspect of the Montgomery G.I. Bill, Lincoln responded that she didn't think retention was necessarily an issue, but added, "I think the bottom line is fairness. There is no reason why benefits should not be commensurate to the job that they are doing."

According to Michael Dominguez, Principle Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, however, he believes that the educational benefit has been an enormous retention tool. "The Montgomery GI Bill for the Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR) has been a very effective recruiting and retention incentive." He added, "Not only does the MGIB-SR program help maintain consistently high retention rates, but it also increases the education level of the Reserve force."

Keith Wilson, Director, Education Service for the Veterans Benefits Administration at the Department of Veterans Affairs, lauded the creation of the Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP), enacted in the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2005. "It provides an enhanced benefit for reservists and those in the National Guard." He added that this new program "makes certain reservists who were activated for a contingency operation for at least 90 days on or after September 11, 2001, either eligible for education benefits or eligible for increased benefits."

Vice Admiral Norbert Ryan, Jr., USN (Ret.), National President of the Military Officers Association of America shared his support for the REAP program, but suggested that Congress expand the

benefits for the Selected Reserves and to address the benefits gap between the active duty and Reserves program. “A new architecture is needed to align the Montgomery GI Bill with the realities of the Total Force policy in the 21st Century,” he said. He also suggested that Reservists be allowed to retain their educational benefits up to ten years after leaving service. “No volunteer should be forced to stay in service in order to retain the benefits under the GI Bill,” he said.

Subcommittee members said they would continue to focus on benefits for military personnel and were receptive to improving and expanding the Montgomery GI Bill for the Select Reserves. As Chairman McHugh noted, the Military Personnel Committee has significantly improved the benefits for our reservists. “We have substantially, in this committee, increased Reserve bonuses and incentives... We’re looking now at the issue of fairness and that’s what brings us together,” he said.

###

<http://armedservices.house.gov/>