

**Statement for the Hearing Record**  
**Congressman Robert C. “Bobby” Scott**  
**Committee on Veterans’ Affairs – Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity**  
**340 Cannon House Office Building**  
**Thursday, January 17, 2008**

Chairwoman Herseth Sandlin, Ranking Member Boozman, and members of the subcommittee, I appreciate you holding this important hearing on pending legislation that would affect the Montgomery G.I. Bill.

There are only a few events in our history that have galvanized all Americans to stand in unison to defend this great nation. Sixty-six years ago, the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 was such a moment for what has been termed the “Greatest Generation.” The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 constituted such a moment for this generation of Americans.

Since World War II, as a part of our recognition and appreciation of the great sacrifices of those who put their lives on the line in defense of our nation, our government has offered educational assistance to our veterans when they returned home. The first G.I. bill in 1944 helped veterans readjust to civilian life and afforded them the opportunity to do something that many had missed out on – getting a college education. The post-World War II G.I. bill paid for veterans’ tuition, books, fees and other training costs, and provided them a monthly stipend. Of the 15 million veterans who returned home from World War II, more than half used the G.I. bill’s benefits to better themselves through education.

Since then, Congress passed several other G.I. bills to grant educational benefits to veterans returning from the Korean War and the Vietnam War. After the Vietnam War, Congress passed two G.I. bills that established peacetime educational benefits for members of the Armed Services – most recently the Montgomery G.I. Bill of 1985. Although the Montgomery G.I. Bill provides educational benefits, it was not designed to meet the needs of our current situation in which several hundred thousand men and women in uniform are fighting full time in Afghanistan and Iraq. Our military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have strained our all-volunteer military, forcing many of our men and women in uniform into extended tours of duty.

Last year, I introduced H.R. 2702, the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act. H.R. 2702 is the companion bill to S. 22, introduced by Senator Jim Webb of Virginia. The House version of the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act currently has 88 bi-partisan cosponsors, including Veterans’ Affairs Committee Chairman Bob Filner.

The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act is designed to expand the educational benefits that our nation offers to our brave men and women who have served us so honorably since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The House bill will provide for the entire cost of tuition for a four-year public university and also provide a \$1000 monthly stipend. The bill will also extend these benefits to members of the Reserve and National Guard who have been pulled out of college or away from their jobs to serve multiple tours of duty in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The current Montgomery G.I. Bill is an adequate education benefit for peacetime service; however, it is not an adequate education benefit for the hundreds of thousands of men and women in uniform who have served in Afghanistan and Iraq. To receive benefits under the current Montgomery G.I. Bill, service members are required to pay \$100 a month for the first year of his or her enlistment. This required \$1200 investment results in only a flat \$800 monthly payment towards college tuition, which barely covers the cost of a college education today. We desperately need to reform the G.I. Bill to provide a stronger education benefit to our men and women in uniform that accurately reflects the cost of an education.

Everyone on this subcommittee understands the value of a college education. The men and women who have taken it upon themselves to enlist in our Armed Forces deserve to have access to a quality education with little to no cost. It is the least that we can do for those who have sacrificed so much for this great nation. I thank the subcommittee for holding this hearing and I hope that you will take a close look at the provisions in H.R. 2702. We must pass comprehensive reform to the G.I. Bill program to truly honor and support those who have served and defended this nation after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.