

Rep. Peter Welch on Thursday introduced legislation he authored that would help military personnel and veterans transfer education benefits to their dependents.

The bill was inspired by a Vermont National Guardsman who contacted Welch after finding that he could not use his Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to pay for his daughter's last year of college. Though the program allows dependents to use GI Bill benefits until they turn 26 years old, it does not currently allow military personnel and veterans to transfer those benefits to dependents older than 22.

Welch's Post-9/11 GI Bill Improvement Act directs the Department of Defense to allow the transfer of benefits through the age of 26.

"The Post-9/11 GI Bill was written to reward those who have served our country by helping them and their children achieve higher education. We must do all we can to tear down barriers to education, not erect them," Welch said. "I'm hopeful we will pass this legislation so that others like the Vermont Guardsman who contacted me will not encounter similar obstacles."

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, which has received many complaints about the transferability issue, endorsed Welch's bill this week.

"IAVA fully supports this common sense fix to the new GI Bill. Veterans with older children going to college should be eligible to receive transferred GI Bill benefits. Veterans nationwide appreciate Congressman Welch's leadership on this issue," said IAVA Legislative Associate Tim Embree.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill is the most extensive educational assistance program authorized since the original GI Bill was signed into law in 1944. The new GI Bill, which was passed by Congress in 2008, allows eligible veterans who served at least 90 days active duty since September 11, 2001, and their dependents to receive an in-state, undergraduate education at a public institution at no cost.