

WASHINGTON –President George W. Bush this morning signed into law the Webb-Mitchell GI Bill, marking an important victory for America’s veterans and a hard-fought legislative win for U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell.

“This is an exciting and life-changing moment for so many of our nation’s veterans,” said Mitchell. “We’ve made good on our promise to those who serve that if you volunteer, the military will help open the doors to new opportunity and achievement. I’m proud of our men and women in uniform, and proud to have worked to expand education benefits available to them.”

Mitchell and U.S. Sen. Jim Webb of Virginia, were the primary sponsors of the legislation that will provide significant educational benefits for troops who served in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The legislation was included in H.R. 2642, the Supplemental Appropriations Act, which cleared Congress last week.

The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act extends educational benefits to all members of the military who have served on active duty since September 11, 2001, including activated reservists and National Guard. Mitchell introduced the legislation with U.S. Reps. Bobby Scott (D-Va.), Ginny Brown-Waite (R-Fla.), and Peter King (R-N.Y.).

Under the legislation,

- Service members returning from Iraq or Afghanistan would receive up to four academic years of educational benefits, including stipends for housing and books.
- Veterans would have up to 15 years after they leave active duty to use their education benefits.
- Veterans would be able to use the Yellow Ribbon G.I. Education Enhancement Program, in which the federal government will match, dollar for dollar, any voluntary additional contributions to veterans from institutions whose tuition is more expensive than the maximum educational assistance provided under the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill.