

WASHINGTON – A 21st Century GI Bill that would provide military veterans with educational benefits ranging from college tuition to living stipends has earned 295 House sponsors – well above the two-thirds majority needed to override a presidential veto of a bill.

Ninety-one of the co-sponsors of H.R. 5740, the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act, are Republicans. The same legislation was introduced in the Senate by U.S. Sens. Jim Webb of Virginia and Chuck Hagel of Nebraska. It has 57 supporters.

The chief sponsor in the House, U.S. Rep. Harry E. Mitchell, said the continuing momentum reflects a growing disconnect between Congress and the President when it comes to taking care of veterans.

“It’s truly impressive how Republicans and Democrats are throwing party labels aside to get behind our veterans,” Mitchell said. “We still have work to do, and the real test will be next week when the House takes an actual vote on the GI Bill.”

Mitchell’s legislation will be included in the emergency war supplemental the House is set to consider next 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.

Under the legislation,

- Service members returning from Iraq or Afghanistan would receive up to four academic years of education 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 have the ability to use their benefits for program fees, tuition, books and housing.
- 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.

Mitchell introduced the legislation with U.S. Reps. Bobby Scott (D-Va.), Ginny Brown-Waite (R-Fla.), and Peter King (R-N.Y.).