

WASHINGTON – Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi announced her support of the Webb-Mitchell GI Bill this morning, providing another significant boost to the legislation that provides military veterans with educational benefits ranging from college tuition to living stipends.

“The original GI Bill launched millions of families on a course of prosperity and toward achieving the American Dream—and set the American economy on the right course after a draining war,” said Speaker Pelosi. “We can strengthen the middle class again with a new GI Bill.”

Speaker Pelosi is the latest of a long list of bipartisan members of the House and Senate to voice support for the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act, introduced in the House by U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell. Mitchell’s bill, H.R. 5740, has 249 House co-sponsors. Its Senate companion, S. 22, which was introduced by U.S. Sens. Jim Webb (D-Va.) and Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.), has 58 co-sponsors.

“I’m proud that the Speaker and so many other members of Congress are getting behind our veterans in such a significant and meaningful way,” said Mitchell. “We have a responsibility – and an obligation – to take care of the men and women who volunteer to wear the uniform.”

While there are many bills aimed at improving education benefits for veterans, none have earned the level of support of the Webb-Mitchell legislation, which has the highest number of co-sponsors of any veterans’ legislation currently before Congress. The Webb-Mitchell bill has been endorsed by the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Iraq-Afghanistan Veterans of America.

Mitchell said the continuing momentum reflects a growing consensus among Democrats and Republicans that the GI Bill should be included in the emergency war supplemental package that will be considered over the next few weeks.

“We’re gaining support every day,” said Mitchell. “I sincerely hope that leadership will recognize the strong, bipartisan support we have to include this in the supplemental.”

The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act extends educational benefits to all members of the military who have served on active duty since Sept. 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.