

WASHINGTON – U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell and a bipartisan group in the House of Representatives introduced the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act with 170 original co-sponsors, signaling increased support on Capitol Hill for passing an updated GI Bill this year.

“We have a responsibility – and an obligation – to take care of the men and women who volunteer to wear the uniform,” Mitchell said. “This new GI Bill reflects a growing consensus among Democrats and Republicans that we need to get this done this year.”

Mitchell said that the new GI Bill is critical to strengthening the nation’s military because it will help attract quality recruits who are interested in earning an education.

Mitchell is the primary sponsor of H.R. 5740, and has asked House leadership to include the legislation as a part of the emergency war supplemental that will be considered in the next several weeks. Mitchell was joined in introducing the legislation by U.S. Reps. Bobby Scott (D-Va.), Ginny Brown-Waite (R-Fla.), and Peter King (R-N.Y.).

H.R. 5740 serves as a companion to S. 22, GI Bill legislation that was updated and re-introduced last month by Sens. Jim Webb (D-Va.), Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.), Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.) and John Warner (R-Va.), which currently has 54 Senate co-sponsors.

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 up to 36 months 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.