

*Processing of Applications for Eligible Veterans Began this Month*

**WASHINGTON** - U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell will host workshops on Saturday, June 6, to answer questions about the rollout of the new Post 9/11 GI Bill, which he sponsored last year to provide veterans with enhanced new education benefits beginning this fall.

Veterans or their family members can hear from an expert on GI Bill benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs and gather information from local educational institutions. Mitchell will host the workshop from 2 to 4 p.m. Saturday, at Mesa Community College, 1833 W. Southern Ave. (Student Union - by the Clock Tower).

Mitchell will host an additional workshop with members of the Arizona National Guard earlier on the same day. That event, which is also open to veterans, will occur at 11 a.m. at the Arizona National Guard Headquarters Russell Auditorium, 5636 E. McDowell Road, Phoenix.

"We have a responsibility to serve those who bravely served us," Mitchell said. "Part of that service includes making sure that the tremendous new educational opportunities afforded by the GI Bill do not get bogged down in red tape, and that veterans and educational institutions that have questions get the information they need."

The first step in this process began on May 1, 2009, when the VA began accepting applications and processing Certificates of Eligibility to determine level of benefit for individual post-9/11 veterans. Veterans can apply for their Certificate of Eligibility by logging on to [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov), and payments will be processed beginning August 1.

Members of the military who have served on active duty since September 11, 2001, including activated reservists and members of the National Guard, can receive up to four academic years of education benefits, including stipends for housing and books. Veterans will have up to 15 years after they leave active duty to use their education benefits.

In April of 2008, Mitchell introduced H.R. 5740, the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act, where it gained 302 cosponsors in the House of Representatives. The Senate version of the Bill, S. 22, was introduced by Sen. Jim Webb (D-Va.). It passed as part of the FY 2008 Supplemental Appropriations Act on Thursday, June 19, 2008, which cleared the House with a bipartisan vote of 416-12.

"I'm proud to have sponsored the Post 9/11 GI Bill in the House of Representatives," Mitchell added. "It will provide more opportunities for our newest veterans. I am glad that Republicans and Democrats were able to come together to make an historic investment in a bill that will open doors for our veterans, strengthen our economy, and help military recruitment."

Under the legislation:

- Service members, including those returning from Iraq or Afghanistan, can receive 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.
- Benefits are applicable for vocational training and other non-traditional post-secondary educational settings.