



Connecticut Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

February 27, 2014 Public Hearing

Follow up Testimony in favor of

HB 5207 AN ACT CONCERNING COLLEGE CREDIT FOR MILITARY TRAINING

Good afternoon Senator Cassano, Representative Willis, Senator Boucher, Representative LeGeyt, and distinguished members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. I am Dawn A. McDaniel, Executive Vice President of the Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce.

During the public hearing on February 27, 2014, I was asked to review the testimony from the hearing and provide additional insight into translating military training to college credits.

In reviewing the testimony, I found there is consensus that the language should be amended to require that military experience and education be counted toward college credit. Currently, several institutions provide college credit for military experience, however not all. Allowing institutions to decide if they will accept military training limits veteran's options and opportunities. What happens when a veteran wants to attend a specific degree program and that school chooses not to accept their military training? Either they pay for classes that will mirror their experiences or they choose a different degree program in order to meet their financial needs.

Amending the language of the bill will reduce barriers to college entry and ease the challenge of transition from military to civilian life while also acknowledging military training as credible experience worthy of learning credits. When there is a standard for military education credits, military experience and training equivalents will be considered more credible in the civilian workforce as well. This tremendous improvement in the transition process for all veterans from military to civilian life will create educational and workforce development benefits for all – the veterans, colleges, businesses, and the state.

An article posted to USAToday.com on September 27, 2013 indicates that 26 states have passed legislation that supports counting military training for college credit. However, the legislation offers only a recommendation and leaves the ultimate decision to award credits to each educational institution. Without strong language that requires higher education institutions to give veterans credit for their military training, the bill will still allow a hodgepodge of decision making that prevents veterans from choosing a college based on their educational needs rather than their financial needs— essentially denying veterans the right to choose their own destiny.



Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce

Some training and experience is easily translated from military to educational credits (e.g. medic or aviation mechanic, etc.); while others are much more difficult to quantify (e.g. infantry, public relations officer, etc.). In an attempt to standardize the process, seven states in the Midwest—Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota and Missouri—have formed the Multi-State Collaborative on Military Credit to study the issue and share best practices.

The testimony submitted, reveals a general consensus that there should be uniform standards for evaluating the experience and education so as to eliminate uncertainty and make the process easier and more fair. However, there is some concern among those who testified that the ACE standards, while beneficial and important, do not go far enough to evaluate the full experience and training a veteran experienced during their time in service.

We would like to point out that ACE is but one standard for evaluating adult education. There are other standards including the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) and the portfolio method, such as those offered by Charter Oak State College.

The CAEL and portfolio options provide for a broader evaluation of military experience in addition to military education. This process allows adult learners to take exams, locate evaluated courses, and explain their work and life experiences to ensure they receive proper credit for their experience. This may be the best option for some veterans, especially if they were tasked, as many are, outside their original military occupational specialty. The portfolio approach also provides the opportunity to gain college credit for leadership skills and management experience that is so prevalent in the military.

It was noted by many that the language in HB 5207 is replicated in section 6 of SB 212. This bill, raised by the Veterans Affairs Committee, offers a comprehensive approach to evaluating military training and experience and seeks to ease the transition challenge for all veterans.

We thank the higher education committee for raising this important bill. We urge the committee to amend the bill to reflect stronger language that requires higher education institutions to accept military training and education as college credit. We appreciate the work of the Higher Education Committee and encourage collaboration with the Veterans Affairs Committee on comprehensive legislation that will improve the lives of veterans in Connecticut.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide additional comments on this legislation, and I look forward to working with the entire committee to ensure a veteran's experiences and education counts.

Source:

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/09/27/stateline-military-college-credit/2882371/>

Translating military training into college credits

Adrienne Lu, Pew/Stateline Staff Writer 10:23 a.m. EDT September 27, 2013



(Photo: Brent Drinkut, AP)

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Many states want college students who served in Iraq and Afghanistan to get academic credit for their military training and experience. The challenge is figuring out how many credits that training and experience is worth.

At least 26 states have passed legislation directing their boards of education to develop statewide policies to provide academic credit to the largest influx of veterans since the end of World War II, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. The Education Commission of the States, a Denver-based nonprofit

organization, says 19 states have enacted related legislation in the last two years alone.

"There's a lot of interest in a lot of different circles [in helping] veterans," said Cathy Sandeen of the American Council on Education (ACE), which represents the presidents of U.S. colleges and universities.

More than 2,300 schools rely on ACE to review various types of military training and experience and recommend how to translate them into academic credits. But as is the case with AP exams or transfers from another school, each school makes the final decision on how much credit, if any, to award.

"The problem is it's just a recommendation, and schools can choose whether or not to accept it," said Michael Dakduk, who heads the Student Veterans of America, a coalition of student veterans groups on college campuses. Dakduk served as a Marine in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

A DIFFICULT TRANSITION

Veterans on college campuses face obstacles their fellow students do not. Many are coping with physical or mental injuries that make studying a struggle. Others flounder without the structure and camaraderie of the military, or have trouble relating to 18-year-olds more interested in partying than schoolwork. Some veterans have to balance their academic responsibilities with families, jobs, or additional deployments.

Some colleges have tried to ease veterans into campus life by hiring counselors trained in the military culture, or by creating centers where veterans can share stories or hold study groups. A 2011 report by the American Council on Education lauded the effectiveness of those services.

Such steps have become increasingly vital since the 2008 passage of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill, which provides education aid to the 2 million service members who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Under the law, veterans get up to 36 months of education benefits, payable for 15 years following their release from active duty. In addition to tuition aid, benefits include a monthly living allowance and a book stipend of \$1,000 per year.

Since the law took effect in 2009, close to 1 million service members have received more than \$25 billion in aid, which can be used to attend any public or private school.

"The one word speech I usually give is graduate, graduate, graduate," Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric K. Shinseki told a gathering of student veterans earlier this year. "If I sound like your dad, I am. I'm paying most of your bills."

WHAT IS MILITARY SERVICE WORTH?

As veterans have flooded the nation's campuses, efforts to translate military training and experience into academic credit have taken on new urgency. But the challenges for colleges and universities are considerable. Schools often struggle to determine exactly what was covered in a military training course, or whether the instructor would pass academic muster. Sometimes military training doesn't correspond to any course a school offers.

Some decisions are easy: A former medic probably received training relevant to a nursing degree, and a student pursuing a degree in mechanical engineering probably deserves credit if she served in the military as an aircraft technician. But what if she worked as a public relations officer?

Clackamas Community College in Oregon has tried to tackle the problem by creating 21 "bridge" courses to fill in the gaps that may have been left by military instruction. Veterans can combine the courses with their military experience to earn credits in areas as varied as law enforcement, business administration and English.

Seven states in the Midwest — Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota and Missouri — have formed the Multi-State Collaborative on Military Credit to study the issue and share best practices.

Ken Sauer of the Indiana Commission for Higher Education said the collaborative is trying to figure out what kinds of student data that institutions and states should collect to track veterans' academic success. Meanwhile, some schools in the participating states are plowing ahead.

In Illinois, community colleges have designed a new course for basic medical corpsmen to become licensed practical nurses. And in Indiana, veterans who served in the military police or in military prisons can receive credit toward an associate's degree in criminal justice at Ivy Tech Community College.

Minnesota has created a web site to help veterans determine the credits they might qualify for in state colleges and universities, based on their branch of service, occupation, training dates and rank. For example, a combat engineer in the Army at the rank of E6 might be eligible for credits in business administration, finance management, management and marketing at North Hennepin Community College.

"These examples benefit all parties," Sauer recently told a congressional committee. "They save money for both the veteran and the taxpayer, they help ease the transition from military to civilian life—which can be especially difficult for veterans who have seen combat—and they also contribute toward a better educated workforce."

Dakduk argues that colleges and universities that manage to find ways to award academic credit to veterans will end up reaping the benefits.

"By providing academic credit for military experience schools can attract more veterans to their campus which ultimately adds diversity to, and enriches, the student community," he said.

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