

Congresswoman Doris Matsui Fights to Make Sure American Veterans Receive Education Benefits

Successfully Amends Bill After Hearing From Sacramento Veteran

Washington, D.C. - Today, Rep. Doris Matsui (CA-5) successfully amended the Defense Department Authorization Bill to ensure that America's veterans receive the full scope of education benefits to which they are entitled. After being contacted by a constituent, Rep. Matsui investigated the issue with the Army and Department of Defense and crafted an amendment to correct the current law.

"We owe our honored veterans a debt of gratitude for their noble service to the United States of America. As lawmakers, it is our duty to make sure that they receive the very best services and support our country has to offer," said Rep. Matsui.

Sgt. Jeremiah Anderson reached out to Congresswoman Matsui after being informed by the Army that he was not entitled to education money owed to him via the Army College Fund (ACF). The Army claimed that the \$33,000 Sgt. Anderson is due was in combination with funds provided by the G.I. Bill, not in addition to that money as Sgt. Anderson was led to believe.

After thoroughly documenting his case, Sgt. Anderson received correspondence from the U.S. Army Board for Correction of Military Records (ABCMR) admitting that the contract he had signed was misleading. Sgt. Anderson contacted Rep. Matsui for assistance.

Rep. Matsui and her staff thoroughly investigated the issue and determined that a legislative fix was needed. The Congresswoman found that some soldiers who enlist in the Army under the Army Incentive Program sign contracts stipulating that they will receive additional Army College Fund (ACF) educational benefits when their enlistment term is completed.

Furthermore, a recent internal legal ruling within the Defense Department has kept the Army Board for Correction of Military Records (ABCMR) from paying the full amount of ACF benefits owed to some separating service members who signed Army Incentive Program contracts.

The Defense Department's rationale for refusing to pay these benefits is that the ACF program is "subject to statutory caps on payment amounts," but the Department has provided no further legal rationale for denying these ACF payments to service members who signed Army Incentive Program contracts. To date, at least 46 service members have been denied the ACF benefits that their enlistment contracts clearly state they should receive, *even though ABCMR has sided with these service members on the merits of their appeals for full ACF payment.*

"It is clear that we must encourage the Department of Defense to honor their commitment to providing broad education benefits to our veterans. My amendment will create the oversight needed to make sure that the men and women who serve our country receive the benefits due to them in a timely fashion," said Rep. Matsui.

The Matsui Amendment will fix this problem by granting affected service members six months to re-apply for full payment of their ACF benefits in accordance with the terms of their enlistment contracts. The amendment states that the ABCMR can no longer refuse to pay these ACF benefits to affected service members because of any statutory caps on payment amounts.

“It gives me great satisfaction to know that I can help one of my constituents, and veterans across the country, by taking action in Congress,” said Rep. Matsui. “These education benefits help our soldiers reintegrate into their communities when they return from overseas.

And, in turn, our communities benefit from their invaluable contributions both in the military and at home.

We must deliver on what we promise to the brave men and women who protect us.”

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