



# **Durbin, Duckworth, Foster, McMorris Rodgers Introduce Bicameral Bill to Support Military Families by Fixing Inconsistency in Gi Bill Benefit**

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), along with U.S. Representatives Bill Foster (D-IL-11) and Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA-05), today introduced bicameral legislation – the *GI Education Benefits Fairness Act* – that would support military families by extending Post-911 GI Bill education benefits to foster children and legal wards.

**“The Post-9/11 GI Bill gives service members the ability to transfer some or all of their unused benefits to family members, but for years there has been confusion as to whether foster children and legal wards are eligible,”** said Durbin. **“My bill today makes clear that women and men who have served our country should be able to share the benefits they earned with the children they consider their own. This small but common sense fix will help countless military families get the benefits they are due.”**

**“This bipartisan legislation will help ensure that all military children are able to access the educational benefits earned by their family members who served and sacrificed for our country,”** Duckworth said. **“GI benefits help pay rent and tuition, buy books and put food on the table. I’m proud to be working with my colleagues to pass this bill and fulfill the promises we made to our servicemembers and their families.”**

**“I am proud to once again introduce bipartisan legislation to make sure our service members and their families receive the full benefits they are promised,”** Foster said. **“These brave men and women risk their lives to protect our freedom and we owe**

**them the full benefits they were promised. The GI Bill is a foundation of that promise and we need to rectify a loophole that is preventing military children from accessing the educational benefits their families have earned. I am grateful to Senator Durbin, Senator Duckworth, and Congresswoman McMorris Rodgers for their support of this important legislation.”**

The Post-9/11 GI Bill provides education benefits to veterans and service members who serve on active duty after September 10, 2001. It also allows active duty troops to transfer his or her unused education benefits to a spouse or child. Under current law, while the Department of Defense (DOD) includes wards and foster children in the definition of an eligible child, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) does not. This has led to a bureaucratic nightmare for some members of the armed services and their families.

The *GI Education Benefits Fairness Act* would amend the definition of an “eligible child” for the purposes of transferability of benefits under the Post 9/11 Educational Assistance Program to include the DOD definition of a child – which includes wards and foster children. Doing so would allow foster children and wards to receive the education funding they were promised, including providing retroactive pay for those foster children and wards who were previously approved for GI education benefits only to have them revoked.

Along with Durbin and Duckworth, the bill is cosponsored by U.S. Senators Jon Tester (D-MT), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Michael Bennet (D-CO), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Gary Peters (D-MI), Doug Jones (D-AL), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Kamala Harris (D-CA), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Tom Udall (D-NM), and Ron Wyden (D-OR).

This bill is supported by Student Veterans of America, the National Military Family Association, and Paralyzed Veterans of America.