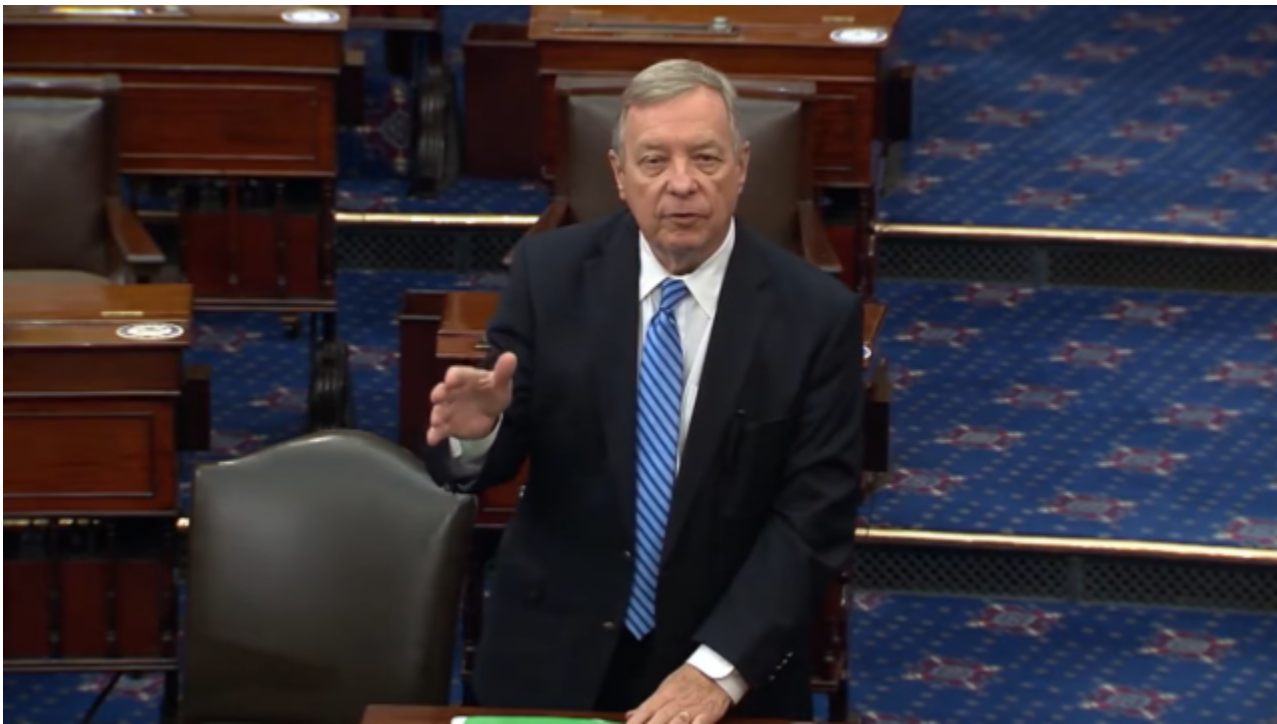


Senator Durbin Introduces Legislation To Restore Veteran Education Benefits After Unaccredited, For-profit College Scams Illinois Veterans

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) today introduced legislation to give the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) authority to restore benefits under the *American Rescue Plan's* Veteran Rapid Retraining Assistance Program (VRRAP) to veterans whose education is interrupted by their school's closure or loss of eligibility. The bill, titled the *Veteran Rapid Retraining Assistance Program*

Restoration Act, would help more than 300 Illinois veterans who were scammed out of their benefits by the unaccredited, for-profit Future Tech Career Institute (FTCI) in Chicago.

In February, the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA) withdrew GI Bill approval from Future Tech Career Institute in Chicago, citing an IDVA [investigation](#) that found that FTCI had taken advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic by aggressively advertising its VRRAP programs to Illinois veterans without responsibly delivering for these students. During the COVID-19 pandemic, FTCI saw a spike in enrollment from roughly 30 students to nearly 400 students in six months without commensurate increases in faculty or services.

Since the unaccredited, for-profit school lost its standing with IDVA, 313 students utilizing the VRRAP and 21 GI bill beneficiaries used all or nearly all of their government-provided education benefits. Under current law, VA does not have the authority to restore VRRAP funding to student veterans. Durbin's legislation would allow these students to continue their education at a legitimate educational institution by granting VA the authority to restore these veterans' full education benefits.

"Congress created this program to help veterans during the pandemic get the skills they need to find good-paying jobs. It is no surprise, given the history of the for-profit college industry that some predatory schools would try to take advantage of it. After bravely volunteering years of service to our country, our student veterans deserve better," said Durbin. "I'm introducing this legislation today to give our student veterans a second chance at their post-military service education by rightfully restoring the VRRAP funding that Future Tech Career Institute stole. I'm grateful that IDVA intervened and took aggressive action to protect additional Illinois veterans from being harmed by FTCI. I hope my colleagues will support this simple, common-sense legislation so that we can swiftly help these Illinois veterans and any others who may have been cheated."

U.S. Representatives Danny Davis (D-IL-07) and Lauren Underwood (D-IL-14) will introduce companion legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives.

In its investigation of FTCI, IDVA concluded that FTCI had failed to provide quality courses, curriculum, and instruction for students. Despite advertising that students would earn between four and seven certifications, IDVA found that only six students had passed one certification exam at FTCI since March 2021 although enrollment was nearly 400 students. FTIC also failed to provide adequate space, sufficient instructors, written records of student veterans' prior education and training, and adequate records

of attendance and grades. FTIC ultimately exceeded enrollment limitations set by IDVA, misrepresented out-of-pocket costs to students, and pressured veterans into using their VRRAP funding.