

Attorney General Raoul Calls On Congress To Pass GI Bill Restoration Act, Grant Benefits To Black World War II Veterans And Their Families

July 28 2023 8:22 AM



CHICAGO - Attorney General Kwame Raoul, on the 75th anniversary of the desegregation of the U.S. military, joined Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Joy

Campbell and New Hampshire Attorney General John Formella in co-leading a bipartisan coalition calling on Congress to pass the Sgt. Isaac Woodard, Jr. and Sgt. Joseph H. Maddox GI Bill Restoration Act of 2023.

The proposed federal legislation, named in honor of two Black World War II veterans, would extend eligibility for housing loans and educational assistance administered by the secretary of Veterans Affairs to Black World War II veterans, their surviving spouses, and certain direct descendants if the veteran was previously denied benefits on the basis of race.

[In a letter to Congress](#), Raoul and 23 attorneys general said the legislation, through expanding access to homeownership and education, would help rectify past wrongs and fuel continued economic growth in communities across the country.

“After serving their country during World War II, many Black veterans returned home and found they were unable to access the plethora of housing and educational opportunities afforded to white veterans. These discriminatory policies affected generations of African American families, greatly limiting their access to the economic benefits of home ownership, including denying access to the middle class for Black veterans and their families,” Raoul said. “Passing the Sgt. Isaac Woodard, Jr. and Sgt. Joseph H. Maddox GI Bill Restoration Act of 2023 is a step toward remedying the historic inequity resulting from the discriminatory practices that continue to impact the families of Black World War II veterans to this day.”

Although the legislative text of the GI Bill was race neutral, the administration of benefits was discriminatory, and Black World War II veterans were often denied opportunities. Institutions adopted the Federal Housing Administration’s racial exclusion programs, known as redlining, which excluded Black veterans from accessing the VA Housing Loan Guaranty Program. Black veterans were also denied access to educational benefits at certain universities on the basis of their race and were instead directed to vocational schools and chronically under-resourced historically Black colleges and universities.

The Sgt. Isaac Woodard, Jr. and Sgt. Joseph H. Maddox GI Bill Restoration Act of 2023 extends access to VA home loans and Post-9/11 GI Bill education assistance benefits to Black World War II veterans and their surviving spouses and certain direct descendants who were denied benefits in the original bill.

The bill is named in honor of two Black World War II veterans. Sgt. Woodard was beaten and blinded in uniform by South Carolina police who dragged him from a bus in 1946. Sgt. Maddox was accepted by Harvard University, but denied VA financial assistance because the agency wanted to “avoid setting a precedent.”

The Sgt. Isaac Woodard, Jr. and Sgt. Joseph H. Maddox GI Bill Restoration Act of 2023 would:

- Extend access to the VA Loan Guaranty Program to the surviving spouse and certain direct descendants of Black World War II veterans who are alive at the time of the bill's enactment, if they can certify that the veteran was denied a specific benefit on the basis of race.
- Extend access to the Post-9/11 GI Bill educational assistance benefits to the surviving spouse and certain direct descendants of Black World War II veterans alive at the time of the bill's enactment, if they can certify that the veteran was denied a specific benefit on the basis of race.
- Require a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report outlining the number of individuals who received the educational and housing benefits as a result of this bill.?
- Establish a blue-ribbon panel of independent experts to study inequities in the distribution of benefits and assistance administered to female and minority members of the armed forces and provide recommendations to Congress and the president on additional assistance to address those inequities.?

Joining Raoul in the bipartisan letter were attorneys general from Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Maine, Massachusetts, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington and Wisconsin.