STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2.2

Decisions on Education Claims

Enhance the ability of veterans and servicemembers to achieve educational and career goals by providing timely and accurate decisions on education claims and continuing payments at appropriate levels.

Making a Difference for the Veteran

VA's GI Bill Opens Doors of Educational Opportunity For Veterans

Since 1944, GI Bill educational benefits have opened the doors of opportunity for nearly 22 million veterans. Matt Stiner, a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom and a senior at Oklahoma State University, is one of the latest additions to that 63-year-old success story.

Matt Stiner is a perfect example of how VA's education programs continue to work for our newest generation of combat veterans. Since the creation of the GI Bill, 21.9 million veterans and active-duty personnel have received more than $80 billion in benefits for education or training.

A native of Tulsa, Oklahoma, majoring in political science, Stiner was among only 75 college juniors to receive a prestigious $30,000 Truman Scholarship. The Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation honors students who are entering public service.

"VA is proud to see a veteran using the GI Bill receive such a prestigious honor," said former Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. "Stiner is a perfect example of how VA's education programs continue to work for our newest generation of combat veterans."

"The GI Bill was part of the reason I joined the military," said Stiner. "It has enabled me to attend college and really focus on my studies. I received information about the GI Bill during my first day at boot camp and always knew I would benefit from it."

After graduating, Stiner, who began using the Montgomery GI Bill in July 2004, plans to pursue a master's degree in public administration from the University of Georgia.

In 2000, Stiner enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps and served 4 years as an assistant chief of a 155 mm howitzer section, as a Marine combat instructor of water survival, and as a Green Belt martial arts instructor. Stiner spent 7 months in Iraq.

"This country was founded on the principles that led to the GI Bill and I hope other veterans will get out and use it," said Stiner. "If you are passionate about something, it will certainly help you accomplish your dreams -- not only in a college setting but through vocational training and other opportunities. If I can do it, anybody can."

The GI Bill's educational benefits trace their roots back to June 22, 1944, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed into law the GI Bill of Rights, which gave veterans financial assistance with advanced educational or vocational training. The current version of that landmark legislation, the Montgomery GI Bill, was enacted in 1985.

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