

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 30, 2015

Curtis L. Coy  
Deputy Under Secretary, Office of Economic Opportunity  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
Washington, D.C., 20420

Dear Mr. Coy,

We recently received an interim response from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to our September 30, 2015 letter to Secretary McDonald regarding the costs of certain flight training programs and whether VA has the tools to protect veterans and taxpayers from bad actors. One of the most important ways that VA can protect veterans and taxpayers from spending excessive and unnecessary sums on flight training programs is by enforcing the 85/15 Rule. This important rule was created to protect the GI Bill from academic programs that rely too heavily on veterans' education benefits to stay in business. The 85/15 Rule requires VA to halt veteran enrollment at programs when more than 85 percent of their students are receiving educational assistance from the VA. We were pleased that VA's interim response included an overview of a recent audit that assessed each flight program's 85/15 compliance.

As you know, VA conducted compliance surveys from April 6, 2015 through May 8, 2015 at all public institutions of higher learning (IHLs) with contracted flight programs. The findings of these surveys were troubling. Three schools were operating non-VA approved programs, and VA banned each school from participating in the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill program. Another 10 schools were found to have flight programs in violation of the 85/15 Rule, and VA suspended these programs from enrolling new veteran students until they become compliant with the law. We believe that this information should be available to all prospective students who intend to use the Post-9/11 GI Bill to help finance their higher education.

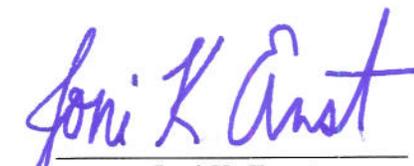
Currently, VA lists "caution flags" for particular schools on the GI Bill Comparison Tool when VA determines that prospective veteran students would benefit from having certain additional information, including when schools have been designated to be in Heightened Cash Monitoring (HCM) status. We believe that this information is important for veterans. We also believe that the GI Bill Comparison Tool should include caution flags that indicate 85/15 violations and whether flight programs are prohibited from enrolling new students using the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

While we remain concerned with unnecessary and excessive spending on flight training programs, we also believe veterans would benefit from more accurate information on the GI Bill Comparison Tool's website. Given that none of the 10 suspended programs have become compliant with the law since VA completed its review over five months ago, we are urging you to add visible caution flags as soon as possible. Our veterans would greatly benefit from having this information.

Thank you for your work on behalf of our nations' veterans and for consistently improving upon the GI Bill Comparison Tool. We look forward to your response, and to the swift completion of another critical improvement that will help veterans make more informed educational choices.

Sincerely yours,

  
Thomas R. Carper  
United States Senator

  
Joni K. Ernst  
United States Senator