

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 24, 2007

The Honorable Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon, Room 3E880
Washington, DC 20301

The Honorable Robert J. Nicholson
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Gates and Secretary Nicholson:

We are writing to express our deep concern with regard to your agencies' failure to accurately inform our National Guard and Reservists returning from a war zone of their Montgomery G.I. Bill-Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR) benefits and to request that you take immediate steps to notify each of these individuals in writing of their educational entitlements.

As you know, the National Guard and Reserves are an indispensable part of both our efforts in Iraq and the broader global war on terror. Between September 2001 and March of this year, 235,703 National Guard and 186,066 Reservists were deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. As of May 2007 the National Guard and Reserves represented 16 percent of our fighting force in Iraq and 15 percent of our fighting force in Afghanistan. These figures, along with the April announcement that an additional 12,000 National Guard combat forces will soon deploy to Iraq and Afghanistan, make clear that these brave men and women play a very significant role in our war effort.

As you are also aware, legislation was enacted in 2005 to reward these Guard and Reservists returning from war by making them eligible for educational benefits similar to active duty troops. If they end their service, these individuals are still entitled to MGIB-SR benefits for the number of months they were activated plus four months. Yet, both of your agencies are failing to properly convey the law to local military and veterans' counselors leading to a situation in which thousands of Guard and Reservists returning from Afghanistan and Iraq may have been misinformed about their eligibility for educational benefits.

We recognize that both of your departments have taken steps, such as updating your websites, to notify Guard and Reservists of their MGIB-SR benefits. Nevertheless, we are still concerned that most of these members remain uninformed of their eligibility for educational benefits. It is therefore our belief that the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs must take immediate corrective action and notify in writing all Guard and Reservists, past and present, of their MGIB-SR eligibility.

When a computer containing the personal information of as many as 26.5 million veterans and active-duty troops was stolen the VA sent out mass mailings to notify those

affected. We believe a similar effort is warranted here and respectfully request that your departments work together and mail to all eligible individuals materials detailing their MGIB-SR benefits. In addition, we request that you allow these individuals to elect these benefits within one year of the date the letter is sent or allow them to retroactively receive the benefits they are owed if they already attended school. Only through such action can we ensure that these brave men and women have the opportunity to take advantage of this very important reward we are offering for their service to our country.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to your prompt response.

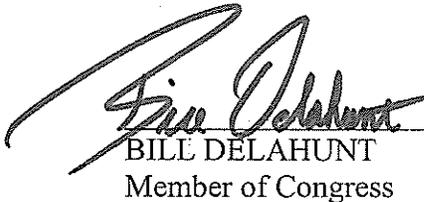
Sincerely,


ROSA L. DELAURO
Member of Congress


RUSH HOLT
Member of Congress


CHAKA FATTAH
Member of Congress

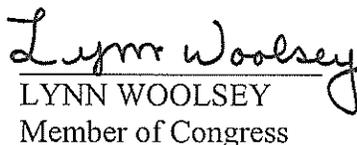

BART STUPAK
Member of Congress


BILL DELAHUNT
Member of Congress


SANDER LEVIN
Member of Congress

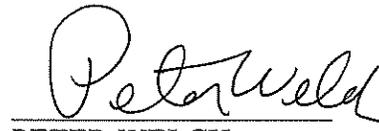

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Member of Congress


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DONALD M. PAYNE
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CHRISTOPHER MURPHY
Member of Congress

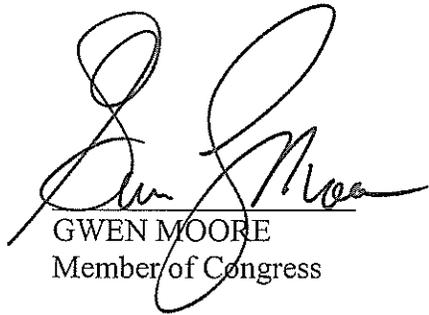

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Member of Congress

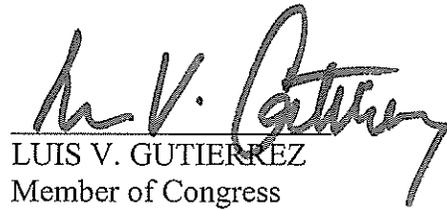

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Member of Congress


DARLENE HOOLEY
Member of Congress

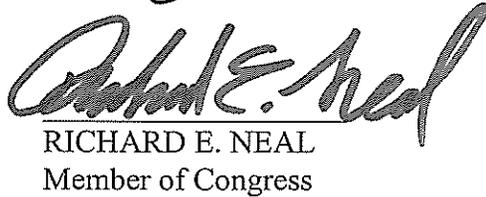

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GWEN MOORE
Member of Congress



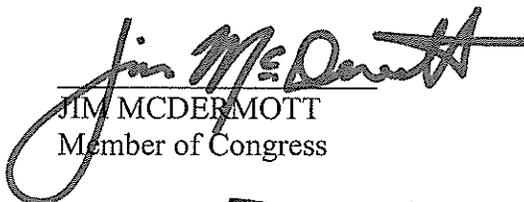
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Member of Congress



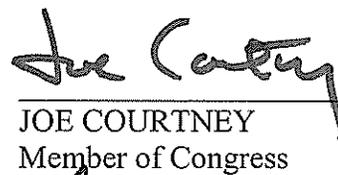
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JOSE E. SERRANO
Member of Congress



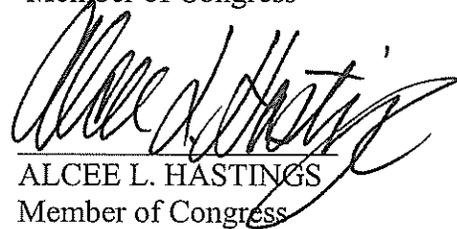
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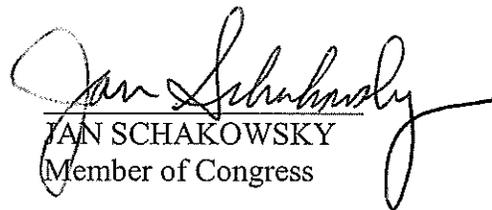
BARON HILL
Member of Congress



ALCEE L. HASTINGS
Member of Congress



TIM RYAN
Member of Congress



JAN SCHAKOWSKY
Member of Congress



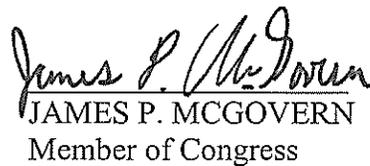
JASON ALTMIRE
Member of Congress



LOIS CAPPS
Member of Congress

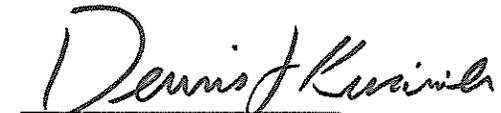


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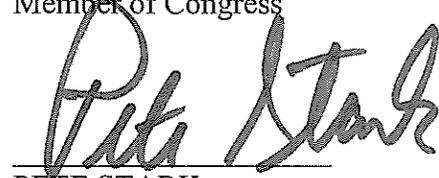

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