



***Frequently Asked Questions as of May 4, 2009:***

***Wisconsin GI Bill and Federal Post-9/11 GI Bill***

***To assist County Veteran Service Officers and School Certifying Officials***

This document is intended to provide information to county veteran service officers (CVSOs), school certifying officials (SCOs), and other appropriate agency/college staff. Because so much of the information is subject to change and is provisional, it is ***not intended for use by students*** or as a tool for making decisions about the use of federal or state veterans' benefits.

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1. ***What is the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008, aka Post-9/11 GI Bill?***

The federal Post-9/11 GI Bill passed in 2008, and takes effect on August 1, 2009 for educational training pursued on or after that date. The Post-9/11 GI Bill provides veterans with a housing stipend, a book stipend, certification test reimbursement, and tutorial benefits. The program also pays a student's tuition and fees directly to the school. The Post-9/11 GI Bill provides different percentages of benefits based on the length of qualifying service after September 10, 2001. A veteran serving for 36 months of qualifying service is eligible for full benefits. A veteran with less than 36 months of eligible service qualifies for 40 to 90 percent of benefits based on months of active duty service excluding time spent in basic military or skills training.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill pays the tuition and fees for a veteran up to a maximum rate. In Wisconsin, this rate is \$663.00 per credit for tuition and \$30,979.00 per term for fees beyond tuition.<sup>1</sup>

Veterans pursuing an education at half time or less or only taking online courses are not eligible for the housing stipend.

Please see the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) website for more information.<sup>2</sup> This website also has links to valuable information on the US Department of

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI\\_Bill\\_Info/CH33/Tuition\\_and\\_fees.htm](http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/CH33/Tuition_and_fees.htm)

<sup>2</sup> [http://dva.state.wi.us/PA\\_Post\\_911\\_Vet\\_Ed\\_Assist\\_Act\\_2008.asp](http://dva.state.wi.us/PA_Post_911_Vet_Ed_Assist_Act_2008.asp)

Veterans Affairs (VA) website.<sup>3</sup> A helpful comparison of the Post-9/11 GI Bill to existing benefits is available on the federal website.<sup>4</sup>

Qualifying veterans may transfer their eligibility from other federal programs such as the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB), Chapter 30 and 1607 to the Post-9/11 GI Bill program. The election to use the Post-9/11 GI Bill is ***irrevocable***. If a student submits a Post-9/11 GI Bill application, they are electing to use Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. Students should think carefully about applying for the Post-9/11 GI Bill as it may permanently affect their educational benefits.

Federal VA staff will be providing training about the Post 9/11 GI Bill for CVSOs on May 7 in Marshfield. Federal VA staff also will offer training for SCOs on June 24-25 at the Truax Campus of Madison Area Technical College. In addition, the Association of Veterans Education Certifying Officials (AVECO) annual conference is July 27-30 in St. Louis, MO. Registration information for the AVECO conference is available at <http://www.aveco.org/>.

## 2. ***What are the proposed changes to the Wisconsin GI Bill?***

The 2009-11 Biennial Budget proposal offered by Governor Doyle includes provisions that would require veterans who are eligible for the new federal Post-9/11 GI Bill to use those benefits before using their Wisconsin GI Bill benefits. As part of the Governor's proposal, veterans who are eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill and instead chose to use other federal benefits (i.e., MGIB benefits) will no longer qualify for tuition remission under the Wisconsin GI bill.

The goal of the proposal in the Governor's budget is to reduce the costs of the Wisconsin GI Bill. Wisconsin public colleges and universities will receive direct payment from the federal government for the cost of tuition and fees for veterans eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill. In contrast, there is no federal revenue directly available to colleges under the MGIB.

However, because the dollar value of federal benefits for which some veterans may qualify for under the MGIB is higher than their benefits when compared to the Post-9/11 GI Bill, the Governor's proposed budget also requires that veterans receive "hold harmless" payments from the state. This only covers veterans eligible for MGIB, Chapter 30; veterans eligible for other chapters under MGIB (such as 1606 and 1607) ***will not*** receive the hold harmless protection under the current proposals. The hold harmless payments equal the difference between the MGIB Chapter 30 stipend when compared to the combined housing allowance and educational supplies stipends for which a veteran qualifies for under the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Veterans who receive less than 100% of their tuition and fees under the Post 9/11 GI Bill based on their length of qualifying service will continue to qualify for remission of remaining tuition and fees amounts under the Wisconsin GI Bill.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.gibill.va.gov/>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI\\_Bill\\_Info/CH33/Benefit\\_Comparison\\_Chart.htm](http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/CH33/Benefit_Comparison_Chart.htm)

Please note that these proposed changes are not final. The legislature currently is discussing the Governor's budget proposal and may make changes to these proposals. No change will become official until the legislature completes its work on the State Budget and the Governor signs the budget bill into law, which is not expected until June at the earliest.

3. ***When do the proposed changes to the Wisconsin GI Bill take effect?***

The changes proposed in the Governor's budget only take effect if they are included in the state budget and signed into law by the Governor. The Wisconsin Legislature is currently working on the state budget but it is not clear when the budget may actually pass or if the proposed changes to the Wisconsin GI Bill will be included in the final state budget. If the Governor signs the budget bill into law prior to July 1 (the start of the new state fiscal year) and it includes the currently proposed changes to the Wisconsin GI Bill, the changes will go into effect on July 1. If the Governor signs the budget bill into law after July 1, the changes go into effect upon enactment.

4. ***When does the federal Post-9/11 GI Bill take effect?***

The federal Post 9/11 GI Bill is effective for educational training pursued on or after on August 1, 2009. The VA began accepting applications from veterans for the Post 9/11 GI Bill on May 1, 2009 and expects to begin processing enrollment certifications for the Post-9/11 GI Bill on July 6, 2009.

5. ***Who is responsible for implementing the Post- 9/11 GI Bill?***

The VA issued some rules for the Post-9/11 GI Bill on March 30.<sup>5</sup> However, many specifics about the program remain unclear. The VA expects the program to operate entirely manually for at least the first year of operation, with the development of automated systems expected at some point in the future.

A cross-agency workgroup is studying the requirements of the Post-9/11 GI Bill and how these requirements relate to the proposed changes to the Wisconsin GI Bill. The workgroup's goal is streamlining and simplifying the implementation of any new requirements for both the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the proposed changes to the Wisconsin GI Bill. Work also is ongoing within each affected agency to address the unique needs of each organization and the veterans they serve. The cross-agency workgroup includes representatives from the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA), University of Wisconsin System (UWS), Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS), and Higher Education Aids Board (HEAB).

6. ***How will the proposed changes to the Wisconsin GI Bill affect veterans currently receiving tuition remission under the Wisconsin GI Bill?***

At this time, it is not clear. If the proposed changes to the Wisconsin GI Bill become law, veterans currently qualifying for tuition remission will likely need to provide additional information to their college school certifying officials.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://frwebgate4.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/PDFgate.cgi?WAISdocID=658741362226+0+2+0&WAIAction=retrieve>

**7. *What information have veterans received about the Post 9/11 GI Bill and how the proposed changes to the Wisconsin GI Bill may affect them?***

Beginning in late February, VA sent a letter about the Post 9/11 GI Bill to any veteran with more than 30-days of eligible service that began on or after September 11, 2001.<sup>6</sup>

The UWS Institutions and the Wisconsin Technical Colleges anticipate they will begin sending letters to veterans attending their institutions in May or June 2009. The letter informs students that there may be changes to the Wisconsin GI Bill benefits and directs veterans to a website hosted by the UW System that veterans can check to determine if the changes to the Wisconsin GI Bill become law. The website is available at [gibill.wisconsin.edu](http://gibill.wisconsin.edu).

VA counselors are the best resource for information on the Post-9/11 GI Bill and should be the inquirer's first point of contact. They can access the inquirer's VA account and provide specific, personal guidance regarding eligibility and program information. VA counselors are available at 888.GI-BILL-1 (888-442-4551) or [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov).

Please note, however, that federal VA counselors will not have any information on the proposed changes to the Wisconsin GI Bill. Veterans will need to carefully consider the advice from VA counselors in the context of Wisconsin's unique situation.

**8. *How will the proposed changes affect the child or spouse of qualified Wisconsin veterans currently using the Wisconsin GI Bill?***

If enacted into law, the proposed changes to the Wisconsin GI Bill may require eligible children and spouses to submit additional information to the school they are attending.

**9. *Where can I find out more information about the Wisconsin GI Bill?***

Please see [http://dva.state.wi.us/Ben\\_education.asp](http://dva.state.wi.us/Ben_education.asp), which is the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs website that includes information on education benefits for veterans.

**10. *Will the proposed changes to the Wisconsin GI Bill affect veterans who are not eligible for the Wisconsin GI Bill?***

No, the proposed changes to the Wisconsin GI Bill will not affect veterans who are not eligible for the Wisconsin GI Bill. The best resource for more information on the Post-9/11 GI Bill is the federal VA.

**Questions?** Contact Nancy Merrill, WTCS Policy Advisor and Federal Relations Officer by email at [nancy.merrill@wtcsystem.edu](mailto:nancy.merrill@wtcsystem.edu) or by phone at 608-267-9514.

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<sup>6</sup>[http://www.gibill.va.gov/documents/CH33\\_veteran\\_outreach\\_letter.pdf](http://www.gibill.va.gov/documents/CH33_veteran_outreach_letter.pdf)