

SB 820 Veterans In State Tuition

Testimony by Mark San Souci, 27 March 2013, Oregon Senate Veterans & Emergency Preparedness Committee

Chair Boquist and committee, on behalf of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, thank you for the opportunity to discuss and to express Department of Defense support for SB 820 in an effort to 'Allows nonresident veterans discharged under other than dishonorable conditions to pay tuition and fees at Oregon resident rates.'

My name is Mark San Souci, Department of Defense Regional Liaison for Military Families for the Northwest, working for the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Family & Community Policy. With bill hearings in other states, I am sorry I cannot be with you today to offer this in person.

As of March 13th, when the State of Virginia enacted legislation resembling SB 820, there are now 20 states allowing new veterans receiving the Post 9-11 GI Bill to pay in state tuition rates in the first year of study. And as of today, 15 other states besides Oregon also have similar bills in their legislatures.

The 20 states that have already recognized that waiving the time required to establish "in state rates" for tuition purposes benefits their state.

These 20 states know that they can attract veteran students based on suitability of degree requirements and not necessarily on affordability (GI Bill directly pays the IHL for in-state tuition rates). These veterans will become residents and may establish long term affiliations with a state IHLs.

They also know that other states that do not offer such consideration may inadvertently incentivize veterans to take their tuition benefits, and

potential long-term contributions, to a state that allows them to establish residency for tuition purposes. Like their state!

States still have the right to assert other proof of residency requirements to show that the veteran intends to remain in the state (driver's license, voting, taxes, establishing a domicile, etc). Other salient points:

- Businesses need as many more high skilled people, from certificates to grad degrees, as can be produced;
- School officials I talk with like vets because they come with GI Bill funding.
- Veterans add a work ethic and leadership element other students find to be positive and congenial.
- Oregon is a popular state, and many vets stay here for your high quality of life, for careers, and for long-term residency.
- The generation of vets this targets includes almost all of whom have done multiple combat tours in Iraq/Afghanistan. That are 1% of our young people serving our nation; we need to incorporate them deeply into our communities.
- What we are seeking here is that new veterans have the opportunity to compete for existing "in-state" tuition slots, as opposed to the institution giving up an "out of state" admission for such purposes. Veterans would not be guaranteed admission, but would have to "compete" for entrance like anyone else.

Clearly, military veterans face huge challenges today to transition back into what we would hope to be productive in civilian society and gainful employment. We believe this measure to help with the educational transition aids greatly in the transition. SB 820 will help level the playing field for our veterans so they can meet their family's financial needs while continuing the educational opportunities so needed for a successful transition.

In closing, we are grateful for the tremendous effort that Oregon has historically provided in supporting our service members and their

families, including the veterans academic and occupational credit bill last year and the others before that.

I wish to thank this committee for taking up this measure, and appreciate that you have been a champion for us for many years. I apologize for not being able to make this hearing in person, and expect to make it next time!

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MARK B. SAN SOUCI

Northwest Regional State Liaison (WA, AK, ID, OR)

Defense State Liaison Office

Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense

(Military Community and Family Policy)

571-309-4622 or 253-273-2214

www.USA4MilitaryFamilies.org

Mark.SanSouci@osd.mil