



VRC

Veterans Resource Center

Portland State University Veterans Resource Center
PO Box 751, Portland, Oregon 97207
503-725-9807

Representative Brad Witt
900 Court St. NE, H-374
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Mr. Witt,

The PSU Veterans Resource Center is in full support of HB 2645. As the bill takes shape and moves to the floor, you can count on us to help build momentum or simply provide support. Our community faces a number of difficulties when transitioning from the military to civilian life. Using the Post 9/11 GI Bill should never be a hassle, and those using it deserve the opportunity to complete their degrees before their benefits are exhausted. Many servicemembers and veterans joined the military in order to receive the GI Bill, and make incredible sacrifices to reach their personal and educational goals.

On January 27, 2015, the VRC contacted student veterans via email to ask "Why is priority registration for Veterans important?" Below are the words of the students who wish to advocate for this change.

1. "Priority registration will help me plan for my chapter 31 and previously chapter 33 benefits. There have been times where scheduling class have been difficult, which delayed my proof a registration through the VA resource office."
2. "Many veterans which includes myself still are in the NG or RA components which do not allow for rescheduling of training simply for school. If I could register a bit earlier I would be able to work around that schedule easier."
3. "The current system at Portland State allows you to register by class standing allowing honors students and majors to register for their classes with priority. This was unfair because even though I am a veteran and a senior class standing I was not able to get the class time that worked with my work schedule. This caused an inconvenience with my clients reflecting negatively on my professional reputation."

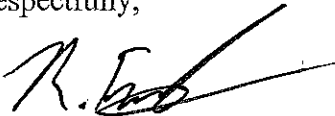
4. "It's frustrating having to wait for classes and also not having all of our military credits not transfer over. I feel vets should be given priority with registration and for getting classes. Most of us coming out of the service rely on the GI bill for an income, if we can't get registered we don't have anything to live on."
5. "No priority registration causes government to pay for extraneous classes vets take to maintain full time status. GI Bill only pays for 36 months of classes, no matter the status, so vets lose benefits and need student loans to complete school. Government pays this interest and less time in workforce leads to less taxable revenue. Vets are on bottom of list cause the credit for service they receive doesn't let them register on an appropriate level with peers."
6. "Something that seems so minimal like priority registration would really mean a lot to me. It is just one way that universities and states can show that they care and thank Veterans for their service. This would also assist in members turning in the VA form early to make sure it is proceed on time. "
7. "We have more requirements placed on us by the school and the VA. We can't just take classes that interest us. We must take degree requirements. Therefore, we must get those classes."
8. "As a Veteran I face a number of challenges going back to college after a career in the Armed Forces. Priority Registration wouldn't put us an unfair advantage but would clear one of the many hurdles that college bound veterans face when attempting to secure registration for classes that are required for graduation by a large majority of the student body. Too often a required course must wait due to being full at the singular time family and work allow. I'm writing in the hope that you pass this bill and future veterans are able to avoid some of the hassles and skipped semesters that I faced. "
9. "Priority registration should be allowed for veterans because we sacrificed our time in the military, rather than going straight to college like most people do. We should get to choose our classes first because we are older than most college students and are more back in our studies than most non veteran students. Veterans make huge sacrifices, including delaying our education, so how about helping us get back on track with our studies? Something as small as priority registration will help us veterans in a big way."
10. "I have now attended PSU for three terms and during each registration period I was not able to get the classes my adviser recommended I take due to them already being filled up by the current system in place. I ended up taking classes that I did not want to take just to be able to attend school. My adviser said it did not matter that I needed other classes to fill my degree but I felt it was a waste of tax payer dollars for me to just be taking any class because I could not get into the classes I am required to take. "

11. "It is very difficult when we (veterans) live a little far away from campus and don't have the resources to come to campus try to get a counselor to sign the eligibility form and then submit with the veterans office. If we have priority registration we would be able to accelerate the process by getting the necessary documents done right before an end of a term, and take advantage of such benefit. "
12. "Our GI bill is time sensitive and the ability to have priority registration would help us get our required coursework and complete our degree sooner, thus increasing graduation rates."
13. "I believe Priority Registration is needed for veterans, especially active duty service members in order to facilitate transitioning into a civilian environment from an active duty lifestyle. Dates often interfere and may be discouraging in the attempt to pursue an education, which is not only beneficial to the service member but also vital in a flourishing community."
14. "With many service members returning from war, veterans are the quickest growing community. By allowing priority registration for veterans we are sending a message that veterans are welcomed here, which is a message that was lacking post Vietnam. What we do will set the trend for enrollment nationwide. It pressures other universities to do better for the disadvantaged veteran population. We need to decide if we are a veteran accepting campus-or if we are part of the \$60 and a train ticket home mentality."
15. "My GI Bill will only cover classes that count towards my degree. When I have to wait to enroll in a class, and am put on waiting lists, that puts my finances in peril. I would have to sign up for many classes, just in case I cannot get into the one I need. For a normal student, this is not a problem, but being unable to get into a class required for my degree and replacing it with one that does not count towards my degree, means I will not be paid for that class."
16. "On the G.I. Bill we only have a limited amount of time to finish school. It is not uncommon to need a class that may only be offered every other term or so that we cannot get in time. This can mean that we do not graduate on time, or potentially at all. Also we are limited from the beginning to taking only the courses in our major. We have to try and get 12 credits a term that fit our major so that we get the full benefit. This becomes harder and harder the closer we get to graduation and the number of classes we can take dwindles. "
17. "Veterans are limited in the courses they are able to get into because of prerequisites required by colleges and universities. This is important from the housing money you receive especially if you depend on being a full time student and rely on this income to help pay your living expenses and from the stand point of getting into necessary classes you may need for your degree due to your lower class standing."

18. Many veterans have developed their own families and have an obligation to take care of them. It is financially difficult to do while going to school so vets take the quickest route through school possible sometimes taking an additional class past full-time to speed up the process. Priority registration would best benefit the veterans on campus so that they can finish their degrees and continue supporting their families with better jobs and opportunity.
19. Is important because as a veteran, a lot of us are using the GI Bill to pay for school. Being able to register early gives us the opportunity to file our claims earlier to ensure timely tuition payments to not only our school but also to ensure on time receipt of our living stipends to help pay for expenses while pursuing an education. A significant number of veterans are in the position where they are trying to go to school while providing for their families and not having that money come in on time causes undue burden and stress.

On behalf of the servicemembers, veterans, and the many military family members who utilize education benefits at our university, I thank you for your leadership and advocacy for our community. Please feel free to contact me at rfacundo@pdx.edu or 503-725-2152.

Respectfully,



Ray Facundo
Coordinator of Student Veteran Services
Veterans Resource Center

