

## February 15, 2006: Sanchez Cosponsors Total Force G.I. Bill

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Sanchez Cosponsors Total Force G.I. Bill

Legislation would improve educational benefits for Reservists and National Guard

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez joined a bipartisan group of legislators as an original cosponsor of the "Total Force G.I. Bill." The legislation aims to match educational benefits for members of the National Guard and Reserve for their increased service to the nation.

"We must extend educational benefits to our citizen soldiers to help them alleviate financial hardships and rebuild their careers after their honorable service," said Sanchez.

"Our reservists are fighting side-by-side with our active duty troops in Iraq; their service must be compensated by improved benefits."

Members of the Guard and Reserve components continue to make an essential contribution to support our missions in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere around the world. Although Reservists are being called to duty and mobilized for an average of 18 months, when they leave the Selected Reserves they do not receive the same educational benefits as the Active Duty soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines that they serve alongside.

While Senate and House bills have some differences, overall the Total Force GI Bills would:

- Consolidate the Active Duty and Selected Reserve MGIB programs under one authority by transferring them into the jurisdiction of the Veterans Affairs Committee and the Veterans Administration.

- Create a rule of proportionality for Selected Reserve MGIB benefits. Any increase to the MGIB for Active Duty would be matched by a proportional increase to the Selected Reserve benefit.

- Make the existing Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP) available even if the soldier leaves the Reserves.

REAP provides an extra payment for those Reservists who served on active duty, but, unlike the Active Force, Reservists lose their benefit if they leave the military.

- Enable Guard and Reservists who serve on active duty for at least 90 days to receive a month-for-month MGIB benefit for up to 36 months. For example, if a Reservist serves 18 months on active duty, she would get 18 months of the MGIB at the Active Duty rate, and could use the benefits for 10 years after she leaves the service.

- Establish a 10-year limit on the eligibility and use of the Selected Reserve MGIB for those who qualify for non-regular retirement and leave the Selected Reserve. This change would resemble the MGIB benefit for Active Duty. The current G.I. Bill prohibits Reserve or National Guard members deployed on active duty to access educational benefits once they leave the Reserves. Active Duty troops have up to 10 years to use the educational benefits.

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