

Soldiers' Education Under Assault By Bureaucrats

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[Editor's note: This article was submitted by Duroy Burnett, Jr., eight year Navy vet and current student.]

When I enlisted in our nation's Armed Services, I did so with the understanding that my personal goals – namely, education – were to be interrupted. It wasn't a unique impression. We all put the interests of our country before our own, because it was the honorable thing – because it was the right thing.

Fortunately, my transition back into civilian life was a smooth, if still challenging, one. I went back to school, thanks in part to the education grants afforded by the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Indeed, I wasn't alone: A nationwide review of benefits used by returning veterans found the most popular choices for secondary education were for-profit and community colleges.

But even as legislators have worked to make higher education an affordable reality for veterans through a more robust GI Bill, the promise of education and a smooth transition from soldier to citizen might ring hollow for my yet-retained brothers in arms, lest the Administration's assault on career college institutions is prevented.

A recently-proposed initiative by the Department of Education jeopardizes the ability of veterans to pursue a secondary education degree by crippling for-profit career colleges and universities. The rule – designated yet misnamed the Gainful Employment Rule – unfairly mandates that if selectively-imposed loan repayment standards were not met several financial aid programs would be eliminated.

The regulation would impose unrealistic federal student loan repayment standards on career colleges, for little reason beyond that bureaucrats in the Department of Education – like all too many in the administration – are reflexively opposed to private sector competition. Those institutions, perhaps like the one I attended, who fail to meet the proposed mandates of the new regulatory regime, will be denied federal aid for their students.

Like those who came before me and those who will follow, career colleges afforded me balance: family, school and career. But if this big government measure becomes a reality, would-be student veterans will find themselves without education options and without a future of their choosing.

With one industry after the next toppled by big government bureaucrats, from the auto industry to the health care sector, it was only time until they came for the schools. But when then president's men picked a fight with for-profit schools, they didn't realize they were picking a fight with our nation's men and women in uniform – and you can be damn sure we won't be pushed around by a handful of eager-to-please bureaucrats.

I fought for our freedoms; men and women the world-over still fight for those freedoms today. At least the administration could show some appreciation by giving our veterans and active duty military personnel the freedom to pursue the educational track that best serves them, not special interest-aligned bureaucrats.