

# Let Vets Have College Choice

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jon-soltz/let-vets-have-college-choice-744067.html>

It's not often you'll find me agreeing with an op-ed in the *Washington Times*, but this one <<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/sep/15/let-veterans-decide-what-school-is-right/>> from retired Brig. Gen. John Castellaw is spot on.

Since passage of the 21st Century GI Bill, which VoteVets.org worked hard to pass, thousands of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have taken advantage of their education benefit to take classes at online universities. For many veterans, coming home doesn't mean staying put. For those still in the service, it could mean moving around to new bases, or time away for drill throughout the year. For many, this makes taking classes at a traditional on-campus college difficult, if not impossible. Even for those who may be through with their service, they come home to families, jobs, and other responsibilities that makes picking up and moving to a college campus out of the realm of the possible.

For them, online universities offer a chance to get a higher education, while tending to their transition back to life in the states. For many more, who may be based overseas, online colleges offer a vital service to those who served in war -- a chance to gain the education often required for promotion within the military.

Unfortunately, a new rule poised to be instituted by the Department of Education, called the Gainful Employment Rule, puts use of the GI Bill to attend online colleges in jeopardy. That rule would place restrictions on how much many online universities could receive in Federal aid. The end result would be fewer choices for veterans when it comes to getting the education of their choice under the GI Bill.

At the core of the rule is a government finding that many graduates of online colleges have trouble paying back their student loans, including Federal loans. But, the GI Bill is not a loan. Veterans don't have to pay it back. Veterans aren't the problem here. So, while I agree that as long as these institutions get Federal aid, they should be subject to Federal oversight, we should be able to do that without limiting educational choices for veterans.

In the end, our top concern at VoteVets.org is ensuring that veterans can take advantage of their education benefit in a way they see fit. To that end, the Department of Education should press pause on their new regulation until they can ensure veterans won't be affected by it. Our men and women in uniform didn't put any limits on their service -- we shouldn't limit their choice of higher education.

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