

HB17-1004: Awarding College Credit for Military Education and Training

Improving the lives of veterans by streamlining the process of receiving a secondary degree.

Bill Sponsors: Rep. Danielson, Michaelson Jenet

The Issue:

- Colorado is home to thousands of military veterans who are eligible for support under the GI Bill and choose to pursue a secondary degree. However, many veterans return from service and find themselves frustrated that they cannot convert more of their military training to credit for college courses.
- The Post-9/11 GI Bill provides a maximum of 36 months of financial benefits to veterans who wish to pursue a secondary degree. A college degree traditionally takes 4 years to complete, and because their educational experience acquired during service is often not translated into equivalent college credit, many vets are asked to use up the benefits of their GI Bill on courses they should test out of. This leads our veterans to enroll in college programs and later drop out without finishing their degree because GI Bill benefits have ended.
- When veterans and active duty military members must pay out of pocket to complete their secondary degree, they are setup for economic distress upon graduation. We put veterans at increased risk of failure to complete their postsecondary education and at higher risk of poverty by putting them into college classes beneath their level of educational attainment.

The Solution/What HB17-1004 Does:

- This bill aims to ease the frustration and financial pressure put on veterans who want to pursue a secondary degree by streamlining the process of converting their military training to equivalent course credit. Each institution of higher learning will be required to use the American Council on Education's (ACE) recommendations on evaluating college-level learning acquired in the military and assigning maximum equivalent credit to student vets.
- The bill requires that every public institution of higher education in Colorado adopt, make public, and implement a policy for awarding credit for college-level learning acquired while in the military by offering students a Prior Learning Assessment (PLA). The PLA will utilize each veteran's Joint Services Transcript (JST) to determine the maximum amount of credits they are able to receive. The school will also provide specific guidance to each active duty and veteran military member in selecting a program of study and optimizing the use of their GI bill benefits.

The Benefits of HB 17-1004:

- Veterans are 2 to 3 times more likely to graduate when given full credit for military education and training: veterans receive extensive education and training during their military service. Granting college credit from a veteran's Joint Services Transcript would enable many more student veterans to earn college degrees. The impact HB17-1004 would have on veterans lives after completion of service is measurable. This bill would empower veterans to succeed and transition successfully to civilian life. Many more veterans will be able to make a liveable wage in fields that demand a college degree.
- It's good for schools: Colleges and universities will benefit from additional tuition from student veterans who continue their programs through graduation rather than dropping out. The dropout rate of veterans in Colorado will lower significantly, and institutions of higher learning would enhance their rankings since graduation rates are an important part of how they are evaluated.
- It's fiscally responsible: it maximizes taxpayers' investments in the education and training of members of the armed forces. It also makes the most of each veteran's GI Bill dollars.