Why Educational Service Agencies Should be Eligible to Provide Education Benefits to Veterans

The discipline and leadership developed in the military should be important factors when veterans are seeking employment opportunities. However, one of the most pressing problems facing a large segment of the veterans who return home and separate from the military is finding gainful employment. Some veterans would like to go directly to work, rather than pursue a college degree. However, many of these veterans return home and find that they do not possess the skills to find work in the civilian economy. What is needed are vocational training and placement programs that provide these veterans the necessary skills to fill immediate job openings.

A broad based national program is potentially available through national network of Educational Service Agencies, which are uniquely positioned to provide relevant training for returning veterans, as well as veterans who have become unemployed. Educational Service Agencies offer broad based vocational training programs which can provide veterans the skills necessary to take advantage of immediate employment opportunities.

Disciplines offered include but are not limited to Cosmetology Careers, Health-Related Occupations, Office Technology, Technical Computer Programs, and Trade/Technical Programs (such as Automotive Technology, Construction Technology, Electrical Maintenance Technician, HVAC/R Technician, Mechanical Maintenance Technician, and Welder/Fitter). The courses that the Capital Region BOCES offers provide an excellent example of courses offered nationally by Educational Service Agencies.

Unfortunately, Public Law No: 111-377, the ‘‘Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act of 2010’’ did not make Educational Service Agencies eligible to provide these important training programs to veterans. The Association of Educational Service Agencies believes that this situation should be corrected, and encourages the Veterans Affairs Committee to include Educational Service Agencies as eligible entities when it marks up the ‘‘Hiring Heroes Act of 2011’’ - (S. 951 and HR 1941).

Key Points:

- ESAs already provide adult trainings of all kinds that could be available to veterans.
- ESAs were not clearly defined as a school and therefore don’t get recognized by their state approving agencies.
- A simple technical correction of adding ESAs to the reauthorization will not broaden or increase expenses but allow greater choices for veterans.