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Sen. Blumenthal Urges VA to Protect Veterans from Predatory Colleges

Yale Law School Clinic Memorandum Highlights VA's Obligation to Deny G.I. Bill Funding to Schools that Deceptively Recruit Veterans

NEW HAVEN, CT—Today, Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and Veterans Education Success called on the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to act against the rampant deceptive recruitment of veterans by predatory colleges. A recent legal memorandum produced by the Veterans Legal Services Clinic at Yale Law School explains VA is obligated under federal statute to deny G.I. Bill funding to schools that have deceptively recruited veterans.

Many schools use deceptive practices to secure veterans' enrollments and G.I. Bill funds because of a loophole in the Higher Education Act incentivizes for-profit colleges to enroll as many veterans as possible to offset a cap the schools otherwise face on federal student aid. A U.S. Senate Committee report found that several for-profit colleges engaged in pain-based recruiting, such as instructing recruiters to target veterans by "pok[ing] the pain," a practice, which preyed on the psyches of veterans vulnerable from their military experience to increase the chances of enrolling them. Such deceptive practices have led veterans to exhaust their hard-earned G.I. Bill funds at predatory schools that leave them with no meaningful education or employment.

VA oversees the distribution of G.I. Bill funds, and Congress has explicitly instructed VA to deny G.I. Bill funds to any school that uses deceptive recruiting practices. Yet, VA has suggested it does not have the authority to disapprove funding.

"The VA has a clear moral and legal obligation to identify fraudulent behavior at schools that enroll veterans," said Blumenthal. "The VA should also partner with the Federal Trade Commission and other agencies to crack down on predatory for-profit schools so that veterans do not waste their hard-earned benefits on worthless degrees."

While VA has stood on the sidelines, several federal agencies have taken action against the deceptive practices of educational institutions. The Department of Education, Department of



Defense, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, Securities and Exchange Commission, Department of Justice, and Federal Trade Commission have all investigated or sued schools engaging in deceptive recruiting practices.

“Veterans are angry when they find out they were deceived by a college recruiter. They’re even angrier when they find out the school’s predatory practices are well known and that VA should have shut the school off from G.I. Bill approval. Veterans deserve better,” said Sara Nolan Collins, Legal Services Director of Veterans Education Success, a D.C.-based organization that provides free legal services to veterans deceived by college recruiters as well as public policy expertise on the G.I. Bill.

“VA simply has no excuse. It has the obligation to act. Every instance it chooses not to act, VA is ignoring Congress’s clear mandate,” said Corey Meyer from the Yale Law School Veterans Legal Services Clinic.

The mission of Veterans Education Success (VES) (<http://veteranseducationsuccess.org/>) is to protect and defend the integrity and promise of the GI Bill and other federal education programs for veterans and service members.

The Veterans Legal Services Clinic at Yale Law School was founded in 2010 to train law students and to serve the legal needs of veterans. Within the clinic, law students represent individual veterans and their organizations under the supervision of clinical professors.

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