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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 20, 2010

VA Reaching Out to Students and Schools to Speed Benefit Payments *“Shared Responsibilities” Among Schools, Students and VA*

WASHINGTON – In a coordinated effort to speed up the processing of Post 9/11 GI Bill education benefits this spring, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today that it has been reaching out to student Veterans, servicemembers, university officials and other partners to meet its commitment to an aggressive processing goal by Feb. 1, 2010. Feb. 1 is the first date spring payments are due and presently VA has processed over 72,000 of the approximately 103,000 spring enrollments received. Since inception of the historic new program last year, VA has paid over \$1.3 billion in benefits to more than 170,000 students.

“Only by VA and all of our partners working together will students be better served,” said VA's Acting Under Secretary for Benefits Mike Walcoff. “We are making a concerted effort to reach out to everyone to provide the timely benefits that those who served our nation deserve.”

Walcoff said there are “shared responsibilities” between VA, universities and the students to ensure the success of processing the education benefits on time.”

VA has sent letters to university presidents and school certifying officials, state Veterans affairs directors, and notified Veteran service organizations, congressional members and other education stakeholders highlighting VA’s emphasis on the importance of timely submission of school enrollment information.

VA also released a "Hip Pocket" guide and checklist, with helpful tips to assist Veterans in the application process. The guide and checklist can be found on college campuses and VA’s GI Bill Web site, www.gibill.va.gov.

VA is working to provide timely payments to all eligible Veterans to ensure that students are spared the financial hardships which some faced during the fall 2009 term.

To help address the high volume of claims received for the new Post-9/11 GI Bill, VA hired 530 employees, bringing the total number of education claims processors to 1,200. Employees have been working mandatory overtime since August 2009. Additionally, the department awarded a temporary contract to assist with education claims processing.

Veterans, servicemembers, reservists, and members of the National Guard who served on active duty since September 11, 2001 are potentially eligible for the new Post-9/11 GI Bill. It provides payments for tuition and fees, as well as a housing allowance and stipend for books and supplies for many participants.

Under the new GI Bill, some members of the armed forces may transfer benefits to a spouse or dependent children.

Information about the Post-9/11 GI Bill, as well as VA's other educational benefit programs, is available at VA's Web site, www.gibill.va.gov, or by calling 1-888-GIBILL-1 (or 1-888-442-4551).

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