



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 21, 2016

Contact: 608-266-0517
WDVAMedia@dva.wi.gov

John A. Scocos Column: Back to School on the Wisconsin GI Bill

Although it's the middle of summer, it's only a few weeks before school starts for many in Wisconsin. There's always much to do – buying school supplies and back-to-school clothes for younger children, registering for classes for the older kids and young adults. Our veteran students in Wisconsin are also heading back to school this fall, but have a few important items to take care of before they hit the books.

Wisconsin provides its very own GI Bill education benefits in addition to the great federal benefits afforded to military veteran students and it's not too early to ensure this benefit will be applied to the next college semester.

The Wisconsin GI Bill pays full tuition and segregated fees for eligible veterans (the spouse and dependents of certain veterans may also be eligible) for up to eight full-time semesters or 128 credits, whichever is greater, at any University of Wisconsin System or Wisconsin Technical College System school. This is a state program, entirely separate from the Federal GI Bill.

To use the Wisconsin GI Bill, the veteran must be a current Wisconsin resident and be living in Wisconsin at the time of application unless they are currently serving on active duty. The veteran must also have entered active duty from Wisconsin or have been a resident of Wisconsin for 5 consecutive years prior to applying.

Veteran students (or a spouse or dependent of a veteran) enrolled at a University of Wisconsin campus or a Wisconsin Technical College should contact their campus veterans coordinator or veterans certifying official to start using their state education benefit.

Even if you are not sure if you will qualify, it can't hurt to ask and find out. More information on the Wisconsin GI Bill can be found at WisVets.com or by contacting the student veterans representative at the school.

The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs also has as part of its outreach efforts a student veterans group. We encourage student veterans to also join the WDVA's Student Veteran group. This is a forum to network, share information and also to take advantage of social activities such as football games or other fun events. Please contact Corey Erickson at StudentVets@dva.wisconsin.gov to begin receiving student veterans updates.

No matter where a veteran is in his or her life after their military service, the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs is here to help. The Wisconsin GI Bill is one the benefits that sets Wisconsin apart from the rest in providing the best programs, benefits and services to our military veterans.

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