

Sarasota, Florida -- Congressman Vern Buchanan is working to provide U.S. service men and women who have served in active duty since September 11, 2001 with additional education benefits similar to those provided in the original post-World War II G.I. Bill. The Congressman has cosponsored the "Post 9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Act" (H.R. 2702) to cover the total cost of education for active duty U.S. service men and women.

"Since World War II, the G.I. bill has helped veterans readjust to civilian life and get a college education when they returned home," said Buchanan. "But the current program does not cover today's cost of a college education. Furthermore, it doesn't give members of the National Guard and Reserves, many of whom have served multiple tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, with equal benefits. This bill brings the G.I. bill into the 21st century by expanding educational benefits available to enlisted men and women as well as citizen soldiers who have served in active duty since September 11, 2001."

The post 9/11 G.I. bill would increase benefits to provide the brave men and women who enlisted after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 with tuition, books, fees, and other trainings costs and provide them with a monthly stipend of \$1,000. Veterans, including members of the Reserve and National Guard who have served at least two years of active duty would qualify for the benefit.

"Today, our nation observes Veterans Day," noted Buchanan. "This nation owes an immeasurable debt of gratitude to its veterans who have been willing to make the ultimate sacrifice to defend our nation and the freedoms we cherish. This bill would help us repay that debt by giving them an opportunity to better their lives through education."

The bill is endorsed by the Afghanistan and Iraqi Veterans for America and the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) National Legislative Committee.

"A GI Bill for the 21st Century is a major priority of the Veterans of Foreign Wars," said VFW legislative chair and national legislative committee member, retired Lt. Col. Lee Kichen of Sarasota. "Congressman Buchanan's co-sponsorship of H.R. 2702 is a giant step towards securing this all-important goal. We have long advocated for a GI Bill covering the full range of educational expenses—H.R. 2702 does just that. Additionally, the VFW has long sought to ensure that Reservists and National Guard members who served in the Global War on

Terrorism have education benefits comparable with those of the active force. Vern's co-sponsorship this all important bill, makes it is abundantly clear that he shares our belief that by allowing veterans greater access to higher education, America will gain a new generation of public and private sector leaders."

Buchanan, Kichen and former U.S. Marine Corps Corporal Ben Voorhees of Sarasota participated in a press conference today at the University of South Florida to announce the Congressman's cosponsoship of the bill. The college bound Voorhees was on active duty from 2003 to 2007.