

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 21, 2012

Anne Atkins
804-371-0441

Veterans can use G.I. Bill benefits for more than 1,000 post-secondary education programs in Virginia

RICHMOND— Thanks to the expanded Post 9/11 G. I. Bill, many veterans are opting to return to school. With more than 1,000 approved post-secondary educational programs, Virginia has a lot to offer veterans. Approved programs range from university degree programs to apprenticeships, on-the-job training programs, and license and certification tests.

“In order for a veteran to use his or her G.I. Bill benefits at an educational institution or program, the program must be certified by the State Approving Agency for Veterans Education and Training,” explained Annie Walker, Director of the Virginia State Approving Agency (SAA), part of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services.

Every state has an SAA which operates under a contract with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The SAA reviews, evaluates, and approves post secondary education and training programs offered by educational institutions, businesses, and industries. This certification process ensures that programs meet VA requirements and allows veterans and their dependents to receive their educational benefits when attending an approved program.

The SAA also conducts compliance visits to verify the accuracy of enrollment data, award actions, and previous payments and to ensure payments made to veterans comply with VA regulations.

Virginia ranks fourth in the nation in terms of the number of veterans enrolled and receiving G.I. Bill benefits. “Since 2002, we’ve seen tremendous growth in Virginia in the number of veterans receiving G.I. Bill benefits, the number of programs approved, and the dollar amount of benefits paid out by the VA,” said Walker.

Veteran enrollments have increased nearly 200 percent over the past decade, growing from 17,429 in 2002 to 51,574 in 2011. Likewise, the number of approved educational institutions has

increased 81 percent, from 558 in 2002 to 1,008 in 2011. In 2011, VA educational benefits paid out to Virginia veterans totaled \$562 million, up 346 percent from \$126 million paid out in 2006.

Among the approved four-year public institutions, Old Dominion University and George Mason University have the highest veteran enrollments, 1,916 and 1,222 enrolled veterans, respectively. Tidewater Community College with 4,482 veterans and Northern Virginia Community College with 3,117 veterans have the highest veteran enrollments among the state's community colleges. Strayer University and ECPI University, 5,049 veterans and 4,442 veterans, respectively, have the highest veteran enrollments among the private colleges. Among apprenticeship programs, Northrop Grumman with 42 veterans and Dominion Power with 10 veterans have the highest number of veteran participants. And, Sussex 1 State Prison, 13 veteran participants, and Virginia Beach Police Department, 20 veteran participants, have the highest number of veterans participating in on-the-job training programs.

###