

News Release

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Thousands of veterans walk away from GI Bill benefits

RICHMOND: As of May 2010, more than 27,739 Virginia veterans and their dependents were enrolled in post-secondary education programs on the federal government's dime; 19,335 were recipients of the Post 9/11 GI Bill. Yet, according to the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, roughly half of the service members eligible for GI Bill benefits fail to take advantage. These veterans are walking away from significant educational benefits: \$353.50 per credit hour, \$1,000 a year for books, and a housing allowance based on the location of the facility that the student is attending.

Annie Walker, Director of the State Approving Agency for Education and Training, housed under the Virginia Department of Veterans Services, hopes this will change when NASCAR comes to town later this month. "We're excited that the Post-9/11 GI Bill has been named as the Presenting Sponsor for the September NASCAR weekend at the Richmond International Raceway," said Walker. "This will bring some much-needed publicity to the GI Bill program."

Generally, military service personnel qualify for the Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits if they served at least 90 aggregate days on active duty after September 10, 2001. Unlike student loans, GI Bill benefits do not have to be repaid.

Educational Service representatives from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Virginia Department of Veterans Services, State Approving Agency, will be on hand during the race weekend to provide information to veterans and family members about GI Bill benefits. Information also is available online at www.GIBill.va.gov and by phone at 1-888-4551. If you prefer to speak with a local representative, contact the education representatives at the Virginia Department of Veterans Services at 804-225-2721 or visit them online at www.VirginiaforVeterans.com. Click Education in the left navigation column.

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