



# Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance of 2017 “Forever GI Bill”



**VA**



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs



# Overview

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Since the passing of the Harry W. Colmery Educational Assistance Act of 2017, otherwise known as the Forever GI Bill, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has taken action to successfully implement each of its 34 provisions. Actions taken vary from provision to provision. This briefing is intended to provide updates on the most current actions and IT changes.

# Topics of Interest

The Forever GI Bill focuses on enhancing the Post-9/11 GI Bill for servicemembers, Veterans, and dependents. Section 501 and 107 are undergoing technical fixes to ensure payments are accurately made to students.

Topics include:

- ✓ Section 501-Removes Exemption from DoD Basic Housing Allowance (BHA) Reduction
- ✓ Section 107- Calculate Housing Based on Location of the Campus where the Majority of Classes are taken



# Key Changes

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced key changes on November 28, 2018, in the processing of GI Bill benefits payments under the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017 (Forever GI Bill).

Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) will reset its implementation efforts for sections 501 and 107 of the law to allow the department time to re-establish contracting support and resources to develop the capability to process and deploy spring enrollments for 2020.



Topics of Interest

Section 501- Removes  
Exemption from DoD Basic  
Housing Allowance (BHA)  
Reduction



# Section 501: Basic Housing Allowance (BAH) Rates

Removes Exemption from DoD Basic Housing Allowance (BAH) Reduction – January 1, 2018

- VBA will pay monthly housing allowance rates for the Post-9/11 GI Bill at the current academic year uncapped Department of Defense (DoD) Basic Housing Allowance (BAH) rates.
- For many students, this DoD BAH rate will be equal to or higher than their current payment.



# Section 501: Basic Housing Allowance (BAH) Rates

- Creates two categories of individuals with separate rate tables -
  - Individuals that begin using Post -9/11 GI Bill before January 1, 2018 (VA Rate – uncapped)
  - Individuals that begin using Post-9/11 GI Bill on or after January 1, 2018 (DoD Rate – capped)

[INFO](#)

Basic Housing Allowance		
Zip Code	VA Rate	* DOD Rate
10471	3738	3669

\* DOD Rate applies to the Post 9/11 GI Bill students who had not previously used their benefits before 1/1/2018.

Zip Code	VA Rate	* DOD Rate
94132	4398	4329

*Note: Rate Tables available in WEAMS*



## Topics of Interest

Section 107- Calculate  
Housing Based on  
Location of the Campus  
where the Majority of  
Classes are taken





# Section 107: Definition of “Campus”

## Previous Definition of Campus

- VBA previously defined a training site as a “campus” when the following conditions were true:
  - The individual campus of a school where the student is taking classes (i.e. the school’s science center, humanities building, or athletic center)
  - The physical location where a student is learning in a study abroad program
  - Any internship, externship, practicum or student teaching site

## New Definition of Campus

- VBA will now define a training site as a “campus” when the following conditions are true:
  - The physical site of the training is either owned or leased by the school
  - The school has ownership or control over the student’s classroom instruction or the faculty conducting the instruction



# Section 107

- Requires VA to calculate the Monthly Housing Allowance (MHA) under the Post-9/11 GI Bill based on the location of the campus where the individual physically **attends** majority of their classes
- This change in law applies to all new terms beginning on or after August 1, 2018
- MHA is currently based on the “main campus” location of the school where the individual is enrolled.
  - VA will continue to pay this way until Spring of 2020
  - VA will also correct retroactively any underpayments
- VA will be communicating any changes and updates to student Veterans, Servicemembers, dependents, and schools



# Section 107 Enrollments

## Current Enrollment Submission Process

- Schools submit the student's enrollment information through VA-ONCE
- MHA is calculated using the main campus (facility code) where the student is enrolled
- In a single term, if the student physically attends multiple schools or a school with multiple facility codes (a "guest school" relationship), the main facility code is used

**NOTE:** For the current academic year (2018-2019), VBA will pay housing allowances based on the location of a school's main campus, rather than the physical location of the student.

## Spring 2020 - Enrollment Submission Process

- Under the Post-9/11 GI Bill, starting Spring 2020, VA will calculate MHA based on the location of the campus where the individual physically attends the majority of their classes
- A student's MHA will no longer be based on the location of the main facility the student is attending. It will be based on the location where the student physically attends the majority of their classes.



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# Sections: 501 and 107 Interim Policy

These policies are provisional and will terminate effective December 2019, upon implementation of a fully developed IT solution for both sections of the law.



# Section 107: Updates to VA Systems

The systems being updated as a result of Section 107 will be:

- ✓ VA Online Certification Enrollment (VA-ONCE)
- ✓ Long Term Solution (LTS)
- ✓ Web Enabled Approval Management System (WEAMS)
- ✓ GI Bill Comparison Tool
  - Available Now



# Section 107: Update to Certification Submission

- School Certifying Officials can submit enrollment documents as early as 6-months in advance and as soon as they are available.
- VA will be communicating any changes and updates to student Veterans, School Certifying Officials, and Higher Education officials, State Approving Agencies and National School Associations as it become available.



Topics of Interest

# Scenarios Effective Spring 2020



# Payment Scenario #1:

## Equal Credits at Different Campuses

- A student is taking **6 credits** at a school's main campus in New York City ( **MHA Rate: \$3,669.00**).
- The student is taking **6 credits** at the school's annex campus on Staten Island (**MHA Rate: \$2,724.00**).
- When a student is taking an equal number of classes at two locations, VA will pay the higher MHA rate.

**This student would be paid at the MHA rate of the main campus: \$3,669.00.**





# Payment Scenario #2:

## Change in Credits

- A student is taking **9 credits** at a school's main campus in New York City (**MHA Rate: \$3,669.00**).
- The student is taking **9 credits** at the annex campus on Staten Island (**MHA Rate: \$2,724.00**).

**This student would be paid the MHA rate of the main campus :\$3,669.00.**

- Midterm the student drops **3 credits** from the main campus.

**The student would be paid the MHA rate of the Staten Island annex campus: \$2,724.00.**



# Payment Scenario #3:

## Different Campuses + Online Classes

- A student is taking **3 credits** at a school's main campus in New York City (**MHA Rate: \$3,669.00**).
- The student is taking **9 credits** online (**MHA Rate: \$840.50**).

**MHA rate is based on main campus. If a student is taking at least one credit in-residence, they will receive the in-residence MHA rate of **\$3,669.00** and not the online training MHA rate.**



# Payment Scenario #4: Equivalent Credit Hours change dates in slide

- A student is taking **7 credits** at a school's main campus in New York City– (**MHA Rate: \$3,669.00**) during the Fall Semester (8/20/20- 12/12/20).
- The student is taking a “mini-mester” **4 credits** at the school's annex campus on Staten Island (**MHA Rate: \$2,724.00**) running from 9/17/20– 10/17/20.

Period Paid	Rate of Pursuit	MHA Amount Due to Student
8/1/20 - 9/16/20	.60	<b>Prorated</b> (3669.00 * .60)
9/17/20 – 10/17/20	Full	<b>2,724.00</b>
10/18/20 – 12/12/20	.60	<b>Prorated</b> (3669.00 * .60)



# Payment Scenario #6:

## Truck Driving and Flight Schools

- A student is attending VA-ONCE Truck Driving School in Fresno (**MHA Rate: \$1,500.00**).
- The student is training for 25 hours per week.
- The student trains across multiple locations including San Francisco (**MHA Rate: \$4,329.00**).

**NOTE: When a student's course of study involves travel as part of the training, VA will continue to use the facility's main campus to establish the student's MHA rate.**

**This student would be paid at the MHA rate for Fresno:**  
**\$1,500.00.**





Thank You



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# Resources



- [GI Bill Webpage – Colmery Act](#)
- [School Official's Handbook](#)
- [VA-ONCE quick reference user guide](#)
- [Tips for Getting Started on VA-ONCE handout](#)
- [List of Covered Institutions](#)



# Resources



<https://goo.gl/MLx4id>

<https://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/ForeverGIBill.asp>

