

WASHINGTON, DC - Today, Representative Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (D-VA) joined House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), Senators Jim Webb (D-VA), John Warner (R-VA), Chuck Hagel (R-NE), Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), Daniel Akaka (D-HI), and Representatives Harry Mitchell (D-AZ), Ginny Brown-Waite (R-FL), and Pete King (R-NY), and hundreds of veterans on the west front of the U.S. Capitol Building at a rally for the "21st Century G.I. Bill" (S.22/H.R. 5740).

The "21st Century G.I. Bill" is designed to offer the brave men and women who have served honorably since September 11, 2001 a level of educational benefits on par with those provided to veterans of the World War II era. The legislation will make military service more attractive as we work to rebuild our military. It will also give our troops returning home the tools they need to succeed after military service while strengthening our economy in the face of increasing global competition. The bill has 57 cosponsors in the Senate and 241 cosponsors in the House – a bipartisan majority in both chambers of Congress.

Below is Congressman Scott's full prepared statement from the rally:

"I am honored to be here this afternoon to rally for the 21st Century G.I. Bill with hundreds of our veterans who have served honorably in Iraq and Afghanistan and around the world since September 11, 2001.

For your sacrifices, and the sacrifices of your families, you deserve the opportunity to pursue a college education.

“I would like to commend all of my congressional colleagues – House and Senate, Democratic and Republican and especially my friend from Virginia, Senator Jim Webb – for their leadership on the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act. Everyone on this stage agrees that when we talk about supporting our troops, that commitment does not and should not end when they return home.

“As many of our student veterans have come to realize, the current Montgomery G.I. Bill falls short of meeting today’s cost of a college education. The current program is a benefit designed for peacetime service and was never intended to be a wartime benefit.

“I served in the National Guard and the U.S. Army Reserve for six years, but was never called up for active duty. On the other hand, today’s Guard and Reserve members are serving multiple tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan; getting pulled away from school, from their jobs and from their families. The current Montgomery G.I. Bill program does not adequately honor their service.

“Our men and woman, in every branch and function of the military, who have served multiple tours of duty in Afghanistan and Iraq, deserve an educational benefit that more accurately reflects their service in combat. The 21st Century G.I. Bill will finally honor all of your sacrifices.

“It is imperative that we support our service men and women not only while they are fighting overseas, but also when they return home and attempt to better their lives through education. Now, in this Congress, is the best time to pass the 21st Century G.I. Bill. Thank you.”

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