

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

December 4, 2012

Robert Worley
Director of Education Services
Department of Veterans Affairs
1800 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Mr. Worley:

We are writing to express our concerns regarding payment rates for the housing allowance provided for in the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Because housing benefits are determined based on the location of a school's administrative campus and not where the veteran physically attends classes, veterans enrolled at satellite campuses receive a housing allowance that is not accurately calculated based on their location. In many cases where schools have created urban satellite campuses to cater to city populations, veterans are not receiving the full benefit they have earned. We strongly believe veterans should receive their housing allowance based on where they actually study and live.

The Oregon Institute of Technology's (OIT) main campus is in rural Klamath Falls, Oregon. The satellite Wilsonville campus is 262 miles and a five hour drive north – on the outskirts of Portland, where housing costs are significantly higher. According to Department of Defense Basic Allowance for Housing published numbers, veterans studying in Wilsonville should receive over \$7,000 more per year than they would in Klamath Falls. However, because OIT's administrative center is on the main campus in Klamath Falls, veterans attending class in Wilsonville are penalized and don't receive the housing allowance appropriate for where they physically live and attend class. This is unfair and needs to be fixed.

The Veterans Administration (VA) has suggested that colleges replicate administrative centers at every satellite campus in order to allow veterans at those campuses to receive their earned benefits. Unfortunately, this strategy would require universities to fund multiple business offices, registrars, student-record centers, veterans-certification records and other functions. These redundancies would create significant cost during a time when the price of education is justifiably being scrutinized by parents, students, and government agencies.

The Oregon Institute of Technology estimates establishing the administrative capability to meet current guidelines at their Wilsonville campus would require \$250,000 in start-up costs and \$969,075 annually to maintain. These are significant costs for a small university, and the maintenance costs alone would result in a tuition increase of \$250 per student per year. There has to be a better way. We would like to work with you to both optimize efficiencies and ensure student veterans receive the housing allowances commensurate to their locations.

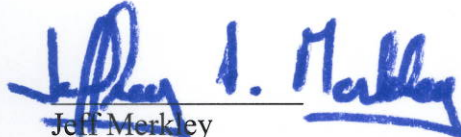
We also recognize that there are likely locations where veterans receive an increased stipend due to the fact their main campus is located in a higher cost-of-living area than where they attend classes. This results in your agency spending more money than intended in the program design. In these tough economic times, it makes sense to ensure student veterans are paid appropriately regardless of where they live.

We request the VA review this matter and propose a plan for resolution. Regardless of where they live, veterans at satellite campuses should be receiving appropriate housing benefits. Please let us know how your agency plans to address this issue and how we may be of assistance moving forward so we can ensure our veterans receive the benefits they have earned.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Jeff Merkley
United States Senator



Kurt Schrader
House of Representatives



Greg Walden
House of Representatives