



February 9, 2016

The Honorable Paul D. Ryan
Speaker
U.S. United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Majority Leader
U.S. United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Minority Whip
U.S. United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan, Leader Pelosi, Leader McCarthy and Mr. Hoyer:

We are writing today to express our opposition to HR 3016, the Veterans Employment, Education, and Healthcare Improvement Act which will break promises that the United States of America has made to its veterans if passed. The bill, which the full House is expected to consider on Tuesday, February 9, 2016, will cause immediate and alarming changes to collegiate flight-training degree benefits for our nation’s military veterans.

We believe H.R. 3016 discriminates against veterans seeking a flight-training degree from public institutions of higher learning because it caps funding only for these degree programs. Other courses of study are not capped.

Numerous investigations by the inspector general (IG) of the Veterans Administration (VA) have revealed a systemic nationwide breakdown within the agency caused by mismanagement, infighting, and alleged corruption.

While H.R. 3016 purports to target and rein in excessive spending, the direction this bill has taken appears misguided and will do more harm than good. The leadership of the House Veterans Affairs Committee had indicated they would work on the language regarding flight training, but nothing has changed and the bill is going to the House floor as originally reported out of the Committee. According to the Congressional Budget Office, this bill cuts educational

benefits for veterans by \$882 million over ten years to pay for questionable improvements in the administration of VA programs and will also impact 600 veterans a year.

A considerable amount of anxiety has arisen among veterans because of H.R. 3016's uncertain impact. Our organizations have received calls and letters from veterans across the nation, and it is worth noting that more than 11,000 communications on the issue have reportedly been directed to Congress.

Without personal financial resources, a veteran would be unable to attain an aeronautical college degree with a commercial pilot license under the proposed cap of \$20,235 on flight training for tuition and fee payments at public schools. This is the same cap that is in place for all private for-profit and non-profit institutions. Sufficient student lending for flight training is unavailable. Flight training does not qualify for a federally backed student loan and therefore is treated by most financial institutions as an unsecured loan at interest rates often exceeding 12 percent.

We certainly understand the need for improved fiscal responsibility and strongly support a tightening of existing VA regulations to curb abuses that have occurred in recent years by a minority of flight schools affiliated with collegiate degree programs. We wholeheartedly agree with the goal to strike a balance and control excessive costs. However, capping education and training for pilots will harm veterans and limit their employment opportunities in the aviation industry.

It is important to remember that GI Bill education benefits are an important recruiting tool for the Armed Forces. We remain committed to working with Congress to ensure our nation is standing behind the commitment made to veterans who have honorably served our nation and who are working on the next chapter of their lives.

H.R. 3016 is a disservice to our nation's veterans, will exacerbate the deteriorating pool of commercial pilots — thereby accelerating the pilot shortage in this country — and will have a lasting detrimental effect on commercial aviation in the United States. Therefore, we respectfully oppose HR 3016 in its current form.

Sincerely,

Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association
Experimental Aircraft Association
General Aviation Manufacturers Association
Helicopter Association International
National Air Transportation Association
National Association of State Aviation Officials
National Business Aviation Association