



VETERANS EDUCATION SUCCESS

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U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal meets with Connecticut Student Veterans about GI Bill Issues, the Forever GI Bill, and How to Protect Future Student Veterans

Active duty and former service-members earn educational benefits through Honorable service, but some schools target Veterans with dishonorable practices

HARTFORD – U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) met today with a group of Connecticut military veterans, including some who were targeted for fraud when they utilized their GI Bill educational benefits. From excessive fees to deceptions about their schools' accreditation, tuition, and other key facts, to being signed up for loans they had not authorized, Connecticut Veterans have faced numerous unethical practices by schools eager to cash in on their federal benefits.

Donnamarie Buffington is the spouse of a U.S. Air Force veteran who spent nearly 9 years deployed overseas with her family. After responding to an online solicitation, Donnamarie was contacted by recruiters at **Colorado Technical Institute** about their Medical Coding and Billing Associates program. She was especially impressed by their assurances regarding CTU post-graduation employment assistance, and so decided to enroll. She was able to cover her tuition with one year of GI bill benefits gifted from her husband in combination with an active duty military wife scholarship and various out-of-pocket expenses. Donnamarie eventually graduated with an associate's degree with highest honors, near the top of her class, but since then has been unable to find employment in the medical field. She has contacted CTU for job assistance several times, but contrary to promises made by CTU recruiters, Donnamarie has never even received a response. She is currently underemployed outside of the medical field with two part-time jobs that do not provide benefits. "I feel like I was promised assistance after graduation but never received any help," she says. "It is discouraging and aggravating that I am unable to find something in the career field I went to school for."

Paul Bristol enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 2000. During his enlistment, he used DoD Tuition Assistance in combination with his GI Bill to attend the **University of Phoenix** online. Paul based his decision on guarantees made by school officials that his degree and credits would transfer to any major university. He eventually graduated with his associate's degree in 2002. After receiving his honorable discharge from Active Duty in 2007, Paul applied to the University of Connecticut and attempted to transfer his associate's degree from Phoenix. Unfortunately, most of his 60 credits were not accepted, and he was forced to retake a number of courses. Despite the setbacks, Paul graduated from Connecticut in 2011 with a bachelor's degree in Business Technology, and he now runs his own plumbing business.

“We are grateful to Senator Richard Blumenthal for his continued leadership and for meeting today to discuss issues important to student veterans,” said Tyson Manker, Veterans Advocate at [Veterans Education Success](#), which provides free assistance to veterans who were deceived or defrauded by a college. “Unfortunately, too many colleges see veterans as nothing more than dollar signs in uniform, which has led to many abuses. America's heroes should be treated with honor and respect when they become college students, not targets for consumer fraud.”

“I was proud to help lead this major bipartisan victory for veterans—ensuring protection and expansion of critical education benefits to reservists, surviving family members, Purple Heart recipients and students defrauded by for-profit-school closures. Veterans have been left high and dry by abrupt school closures and predatory practices, preventing them from completing their degrees and wasting millions of dollars of federal G.I. Bill benefits. This measure is a significant step forward, but hard work remains to ensure veterans' hard-earned right to an education is fully protected,” Blumenthal said.

Lawmakers in Congress have taken action to restore benefits to some student veterans who, through no fault of their own, were targeted with fraudulent and deceptive practices by unethical colleges and schools. For example, H.R. 3218 the ‘*Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017*’ was recently signed into law, and will provide relief to veterans who attended now-defunct colleges. Senator Blumenthal has been a leader in the fight to protect student veterans, and voted in favor of this legislation, the full text of which you can read [here](#).

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