

Opinion | EDITORIAL

## Preying on Veterans

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The for-profit education industry has been pushing back hard against new Education Department rules that will make it easier to rein in predatory schools that strip students of financial aid, saddle them with crushing debt and give them nothing in return. But the evidence is mounting that the new rules might not be enough to prevent some of the worst abuses.

The Times's Eric Lipton recently described how some unscrupulous for-profit schools are preying on service members and veterans.

In 2008 Congress approved enhanced tuition aid for veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars; active-duty personnel are eligible for free tuition. The program has set off a feeding frenzy among for-profit schools, which consumed 36 percent of the tuition aid paid out in the first year — even though the sector educates only about 9 percent of the general student population.

That would be fine if veterans were getting the education they needed. But former and current recruiters in the for-profit sector told The Times that employers had pressured them to enroll as many service members as possible, even if they were likely to fail or drop out.

Earlier this year, Robert Songer, a retired Marine colonel who serves as the lead education adviser at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, warned Congress about this problem: schools hounded service members into enrolling, put them in classes of dubious value and had them take out high-interest loans to cover extra costs. The men and women were “easy targets,” he said, because many came from families in which no one had gone to college.

Americans who risk their lives for this country deserve better. Congress needs to ensure that predatory schools with weak offerings and high dropout rates are booted from the tuition program and that only legitimate schools remain.

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