

Background on the *Protect the GI Bill Act*: Understanding Section 1016

In 2016, a unanimous Congress enacted the *Career Ready Student Veterans Act*, preventing GI Bill funding to be wasted at education programs which leave veterans ineligible for their promised careers. Among the provisions, the Act specifically blocked GI Bill resources from going to law schools whose graduates are ineligible for the bar exam. This change was further strengthened in 2019 when over 40 of the largest national military and veteran service organizations called on Congress to pass additional protections for student veterans in the *Protect the GI Bill Act* (Appendices A, B), including clarifying that law graduates must be eligible to sit for the bar exam in any state. The provisions of the *Protect the GI Bill Act* passed unanimously as Section 1016 of the [Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care And Benefits Improvement Act Of 2020](#) (“Isakson-Roe”).

These new protections took effect August 1st, 2021, ensuring law schools eligible for GI Bill dollars would have accreditation from “a specialized accrediting agency,” such that graduates, “are eligible to sit for a bar examination in any State.” The vast majority of states require students to achieve a degree from a law school recognized by the American Bar Association (ABA) due to the ABA’s rigorous accreditation standards. However, California is unique in allowing anybody to sit for the state bar examination; this gave rise to non-ABA accredited law schools, graduates of which are [explicitly prohibited](#) from sitting for the bar exam in nearly two dozen states.

In an economy that switches on a dime, the mobility of our veterans and their families is paramount. The clarified law ensures GI Bill benefits lead to a law degree that gives veterans the ability to sit for the bar exam in any state, and to enjoy mobility in the job market. This is especially important for military families who frequently relocate across state lines. Yet, in response to this new law, some California law schools lacking ABA-recognition (collectively, known as the “[California-Accredited Law Schools](#)”, or “CALS” for short) have lobbied against Section 1016 of the Isakson-Roe law. These schools present troubling facts:

- [None of the approximately 20 schools](#) met the *minimum* American Bar Association bar passage rate of 75% this past year, and one of these schools (University of West Los Angeles) has a bar passage rate of [just 9%](#) for its first-time bar takers (Appendix C).
- 25% of the law schools have been placed on [probation](#) through July 1, 2022, due to a noncompliant minimum passage rate, or have lost accreditation entirely, including: Southern California Institute of Law, Pacific Coast University School of Law, San Francisco Law School, and Lincoln Law School of San Jose. Several of these schools have also been hit with non-compliance citations recently by the State Bar of California: JFK School of Law-National University and San Francisco Law School (Alliant University).
- Several of these law schools appear to simply be a front for BARBRI commercial bar preparation classes, providing little or no substantive education. One “school” is merely a small office next to a gas station and another has [just 2 full-time faculty](#).
- One school’s website is “[lawdegree.com](#),” a recruiting tactic of lead-generator sites, some that [notoriously](#) operated websites including GIBill.com and Army.com; both were shut down by law enforcement.

Many of these schools have seen steadily declining veteran enrollments in recent years. Prior to the law’s taking effect, these schools had fewer than 20 GI Bill students. And as of this fall term, there are officially *no* student veterans attending with their GI Bill. Despite the desperate attempts of those schools to undermine this new law, the *Protect the GI Bill Act* continues to foster the success of student veterans nationwide. Some of the non-ABA schools have gone so far as to hire a lobbyist who [misrepresented veterans groups](#) on multiple occasions. For more information on the new law, or other student veteran issues, many veteran service organizations stand ready to discuss the history and importance of these provisions.

APPENDIX A

November 21, 2019

The Honorable Johnny Isakson
Chairman
Committee on Veterans Affairs
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jon Tester
Ranking Member
Committee on Veterans Affairs
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Members of the Committee on Veterans Affairs
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC
20510

Dear Chairman Isakson, Ranking Member Tester, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for your many years of strong leadership for America's veterans. We remain indebted to you for all you have accomplished.

For nearly a decade, Veterans and Military Service Organizations have been asking for veterans and other military-connected students to have the same rights as Title IV students.

Thankfully, parity for veterans and military-connected students is finally close to reality with the bipartisan, unanimously-enacted House Veterans Affairs Committee's bill, HR 4625. We are so grateful. Please support HR 4625 in your committee. This important legislation provides the following provisions to support and protect GI Bill students:

- Restores veterans' and military-connected students' education benefits if their school suddenly closes (providing parity with students protected under Title IV);
- Requires schools, not students, to repay tuition overpayments since schools receive tuition funds directly from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) (providing parity with students protected under Title IV);
- Protects veterans' and military-connected students' education benefits from schools terminated by the Education Department (ED). Earlier this year, ED terminated Argosy for stealing Title IV federal student aid, but VA did not have statutory authority to protect veterans' education benefits;
- Requires common-sense oversight of schools following punitive action by federal or state government or the accreditor; and
- Strengthens existing statutes to ensure VA compliance.

We humbly request your leadership to ensure this bill's passage as soon as possible. We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this legislation.


We thank you.

Sincerely,



Air Force Association


American Legion


Army Aviation Association of America


Association of the United States Army

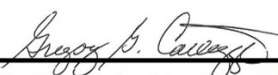

Blue Star Families


Commissioned Officers Assn. of the US Public
Health Service, Inc


Fleet Reserve Association



High Ground Veterans Advocacy


Ivy League Veterans Council


The Military Chaplains Assn. of the USA


Air Force Sergeants Association



AMVETS



AMSUS, the Society of Federal Health Professionals



Association of the United States Navy

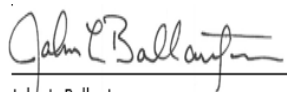

Chief Warrant and Warrant Officers Association


Disabled American Veterans

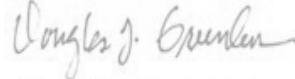

Gold Star Wives of America



Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America

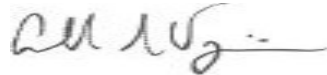

Jewish War Veterans of the USA


John L. Ballantyne
Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer
Military Child Education Coalition


Military Officers Association of America



Military Order of the Purple Heart


The Mission
Continues


National Military Family Association

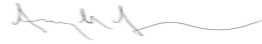

Non Commissioned Officers Assn.
of the United States of America


Paralyzed Veterans of America



Service 2 School



Service Women's Action Network

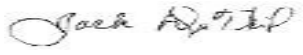

Student Veterans of America


Swords to Plowshares


Tragedy Assistance Program for
Survivors


Travis Manion Foundation

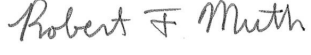

The Retired Enlisted Association



US Army Warrant Officers Association


U.S. Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers
Association & Enlisted Association


Veterans for Common Sense


Veterans Education Success


San Diego University Veterans Law Clinic


Veterans Student Loan Relief Fund


Veterans of Foreign Wars


VetsFirst, a program of United Spinal Association


Vietnam Veterans of America

APPENDIX B

July 02, 2021

TO: The Honorable Mark Stone, Chair, Committee on Judiciary
The Honorable Thomas J. Umberg, Chair, Senate Standing Committee on Judiciary
The Honorable Bob Archuleta, Chair, Senate Committee, Military & Veterans Affairs
The Honorable Jacqui Irwin, Chair, Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs
The Honorable Connie M. Leyva, Chair, Senate Education Committee
The Honorable Jose Medina, Chair, Committee on Higher Education

FROM: The Nation's Leading Military and Veteran-Serving Organizations

RE: California Legislature Assembly Joint Resolution No. 12

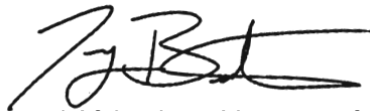
To the Honorable Chairs of the California Legislature:

We, the undersigned, understand that certain California law schools that failed to achieve accreditation from the American Bar Association are pushing for a California resolution calling on Congress to undo the federal *Protect the GI Bill Act*. Please know the *Protect the GI Bill Act* was, and is, supported by more than 40 of the nation's largest veterans and military service organizations. We urge you to stand with our organizations and support the *Protect the GI Bill Act*.

Very sincerely,



AMSUS, The Society Of Federal Healthcare Professionals



Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America



Army Aviation Association of America




Military Child Education Coalition



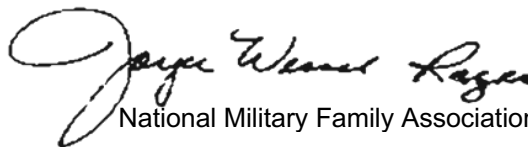
Blue Star Families



Military Order of the Purple Heart



Campaign to Protect Student Veterans



National Military Family Association



High Ground Veterans Advocacy





Student Veterans of America



Swords to Plowshares



Tragedy Assistance Program For Survivors



U.S. Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers Association
& Enlisted Association

Service Women's Action Network



Veterans and Military Families for Progress



Veterans Education Success



Veterans for Common Sense



Veterans of Foreign Wars



Vietnam Veterans of America

APPENDIX C

California-Accredited Law Schools (Non-ABA)

School	Type	Affiliation	Institutional Accreditation	Program Accreditation	2018 MPR	2019 MPR	2020 MPR	Mean MPR
St. Francis School of Law ¹	Nonprofit	Stand-Alone	Unknown	State of California	-	-	-	-
University of San Luis Obispo School of Law ²	Nonprofit	Stand-Alone	Unknown	State of California	Unreported	Unreported	Unreported	N/A
Kern County College of Law ²	Nonprofit	Stand-Alone	Unknown	State of California	Unreported	Unreported	Unreported	N/A
Northwestern California University School of Law ³	Nonprofit	Stand-Alone	Unknown	State of California	18	31	13	21
Southern California Institute of Law - Santa Barbara ⁴	Nonprofit	Stand-Alone	Unknown	State of California	26	21	-	24
Southern California Institute of Law - Ventura ⁴	Nonprofit	Stand-Alone	Unknown	State of California	26	21	-	24
Pacific Coast University School of Law ⁴	Nonprofit	Stand-Alone	Unknown	State of California	26	27	28	27
San Francisco Law School ⁵ (Alliant International University)	Nonprofit	Attached	WASC	State of California	46	42	36	41
Lincoln Law School of San Jose ⁵	Nonprofit	Stand-Alone	WASC (Pending)	State of California	56	44	32	44
John F. Kennedy University School of Law ⁵ (North Central University)	Nonprofit	Attached	WASC	State of California	49	44	40	44
Trinity Law School (Trinity International University)	Nonprofit	Attached	HLC	State of California	45	45	44	44
Humphreys College Laurence Drivon School of Law	Nonprofit	Stand-Alone	WASC	State of California	46	42	46	45
University of West Los Angeles School of Law (University of West Los Angeles)	For-Profit	Seemingly Attached	WASC	State of California	54	50	42	49
Empire College School of Law (Empire College)	For-Profit	Attached	ACICS	State of California	55	47	46	49
Monterey College of Law	Nonprofit	Stand-Alone	Unknown	State of California	48	54	54	52
The Colleges of Law - Santa Barbara	Nonprofit	Stand-Alone	WASC	State of California	59	58	58	58
The Colleges of Law - Ventura	Nonprofit	Stand-Alone	WASC	State of California	59	58	58	58
Lincoln Law School of Sacramento	For-Profit	Stand-Alone	WASC	State of California	67	61	60	63
Glendale University College of Law	For-Profit	Stand-Alone	Unknown	State of California	67	62	64	64
Thomas Jefferson School of Law	Nonprofit	Stand-Alone	WASC	State of California, Former ABA	71	67	62	67
University of La Verne College of Law (University of La Verne)	Nonprofit	Attached	WASC	State of California, Former ABA	-	69	66	68
Cal Northern School of Law	For-Profit	Stand-Alone	Unknown	State of California	73	74	71	73
San Joaquin College of Law	Nonprofit	Stand-Alone	WASC	State of California	77	72	69	73

¹ Minimum passage rate (MPR) not reported due to there being fewer than 11 applicants for all listed testing occasions.

² No statistics reported. Ref: <http://www.calbar.ca.gov/Admissions/Law-School-Regulation/Exam-Statistics>

³ MPR reflects the February testing period of 2018, 2019, and 2020 for first-time test-takers.

⁴ These schools are no longer accredited law schools. Ref: <http://www.calbar.ca.gov/Portals/0/documents/admissions/Education/MinimumPassRateStandardCumulativePassRates.pdf>

⁵ This law school has been placed on probation through July 1, 2022, due to a noncompliant MPR.