

For Immediate Release

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Office of the White House Press Secretary
(Ames, Iowa)

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I am signing into law today S. 969, the Veterans' Education and Employment Assistance Act of 1976. This bill marks a new era in our nation's programs of education assistance for veterans.

S. 969 brings to an end the GI bill program enacted a decade ago for post-Korean and Vietnam era veterans as were GI bill education programs for World War II and Korean veterans at the termination of those conflicts. This legislation makes an equitable distinction between those who have been required to perform military service and those who in the future choose to serve in the All-Volunteer Armed Forces. The termination of the existing GI bill program will not affect the eligibility of Vietnam veterans already discharged or those presently serving in the Armed Forces.

Effective January 1, 1977, individuals entering the Armed Forces will be eligible to participate in a new contributory program under which the Veterans Administration will make matching contributions for those veterans who wish to pursue educational programs.

S. 969 also provides for an 8% increase in GI bill benefits, effective October 1, 1976 and contains a number of provisions that will aid the Veterans Administration in improving the administration of its education programs and eliminating abuses.

S. 969 purports to provide a mechanism for possible extension of the new contributory education program beyond the authorized period of five years. This would require affirmative action by the President in recommending an extension subject to a "one-house veto" provision. As I have stated on previous occasions and reiterate again, provisions for review of Executive actions by resolutions of one House are unconstitutional. In the context of the instant legislation, this provision, a nullity, is severable from the balance of the bill.

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