Help Community Colleges Serve Veteran Students

Community colleges have a long history of serving the needs of active duty military and veterans. Congress enacted legislation to expand educational and job training programs for veterans in recent years, but securing adequate funding to address the special needs of these individuals is always a challenge.

One immediate concern is the issue of tuition for out-of-state students at public institutions. Because of the nature of their duties while in the military, these students often were attending institutions in states other than their primary residence. As a result of previous legislation that modified the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill, veterans attending public institutions on an out-of-state basis have not been as well provided for as they were under the original program. In late July, Congress approved legislation to address this issue as part of the compromise veterans’ health bill, the Veterans’ Access to Care Through Choice Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014 (H.R. 3230). The new act includes a provision (Sec. 702) that essentially requires public institutions of higher education to offer certain veterans and their dependents in-state tuition, regardless of actual residence, for a period of 3 years post-discharge in order for the colleges to remain eligible for Post-9/11 and Montgomery GI Bill benefits. The requirement does not apply to out-of-state distance education students. The in-state tuition provision takes effect July 1, 2015.

AACC Policy Positions:

- Congress should provide greater funding for the Centers of Excellence for Veterans Student Success and Veterans Upward Bound under the federal TRIO programs and other programs that support veteran students such as the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program.