

May 17, 2017

The Honorable Johnny Isakson, Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
SR-412 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6375

The Honorable Jon Tester, Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
SR-412 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6375

Dear Chairman Isakson and Ranking Member Tester:

On behalf of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), thank you for the invitation to provide comments regarding S. 764, Veterans Education Priority Enrollment Act of 2017 (Brown, Tillis). We truly appreciate the opportunity to comment on S. 764 as this bill would directly impact our constituency, which manages the enrollment process for colleges and universities.

AACRAO is a nonprofit association of more than 11,000 higher education admissions and registration professionals who represent approximately 2,600 institutions and agencies in the United States and more than 40 other countries. The vast majority of our individual members are campus officials with direct responsibility for admissions, recruiting, academic records, and registration functions.

AACRAO recognizes and honors the sacrifices veteran men and women have made and its members are proud to help them meet their educational goals. Because AACRAO members recognize the unique needs of student veterans on campus, they work diligently to streamline the full integration of veteran students into the student body as well as the subsequent transition into the workforce. As key stakeholders in helping veterans succeed, AACRAO members are particularly valuable partners in the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs' efforts to create and sustain reliable veteran programs.

AACRAO expresses its support for the Committee's work to ensure veterans receive the support and services they need to be successful and stands ready to work with the federal government and other key stakeholders to advance veterans services at all collegiate institutions. We are, however, concerned about the following aspects of S. 764.

Federal Mandate

We are particularly concerned about a federal mandate around an issue that we feel is better handled at the state or institution level. As you are aware, several states across the nation already provide priority registration to veterans and, in speaking with our membership, they are unaware of widespread issues with veterans registering for classes that would merit such a federal mandate. Moreover, we need to be conscious of the differences that will exist between the various state versions versus the federal one and how individual institutions will need to reconcile these two mandates.

We are also concerned about the precedent that such a mandate would set. Such a measure could easily be applied to other categories of students and, more importantly, have adverse effects on students that truly need priority registration most. For example, one member institution with state prioritization mandate already in place reported that their institution watched their priority registration group balloon to include approximately 15 percent of their total student population, rapidly losing the intended benefit of priority registration.

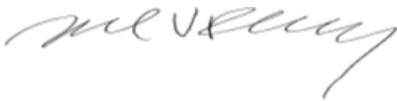
Undue Burden on Institutions

Secondly, we are concerned with the possible undue burdens placed on institutions that do not have priority registration systems and/or policies in place. While realizing it is not the intent of this bill to require institutions to create such a system, we worry that those without one will inadvertently lose their military friendly status.

AACRAO is committed to and will continue to pursue the best services for veteran students. Our members, however, fail to see any evidence that veterans are more frequently closed out of the courses they require to graduate due to lack of priority registration. However well-intended, S.764, seeks to solve a problem that does not seem to exist.

I hope that these concerns with S.764 are well received and highlight some of the possible unintended consequences of the proposed legislation. Thank you for the opportunity to work with the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs in crafting legislation to help our veteran population enrolled in institutions of higher education. We look forward to continue to work collaboratively with you in the future.

Sincerely,



Michael V. Reilly
Executive Director
American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO)