

VFW, SVA, Legion Join Forces to Secure Veterans' In-State Tuition

Virtual map highlights states offering veterans in-state residency waiver

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Today, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. (VFW), Student Veterans of America (SVA), and the American Legion launched a virtual in-state tuition map for student-veterans and veteran advocates. The map, which will be managed and updated by SVA, is a color-coded way to offer key stakeholders with real-time information on the status of in-state tuition for veterans in each state and at specific institutions of higher education. The interactive map is the centerpiece of a new campaign among the three leading veterans' organizations calling on schools to offer in state tuition to all veterans. The initiative is called "In State 4 Vets."

"This new interactive map allows our college-bound veterans and veterans' advocates to fully understand the landscape of higher education and ways that SVA, VFW and the American Legion are working together to ensure that public colleges and universities in every state offer a quality, reasonably-priced education to our newest generation of veterans," said VFW Commander-in-Chief Bill Thien. "When the veterans' community worked to pass the Post-9/11 GI Bill five years ago, the goal was to offer veterans a free, public education at the school of their choice. Unfortunately, many schools disqualify veterans from receiving in-state tuition because archaic residency policies don't accommodate for the unique circumstances of military life. We're working hard to change that."

"The virtual map will arm future student veterans with valuable information on where they can maximize their GI Bill and other veteran education benefits," said SVA's outgoing executive director Michael Dakduk. "This would not have been possible without the support of the VFW and the American Legion. They remain our strongest allies in advocating for and supporting military veterans in higher education."

"The American Legion contributed to this interactive map project because it saw genuine value in it as an easy-to-use resource for student veterans," said Joe Sharpe, economic

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director of The American Legion. "We have been leading a state-by-state initiative to convince state legislatures to introduce bills that would make student veterans eligible for in-state tuition rates. And we're not going to stop until this map shows that our veterans qualify for in-state tuition in the entire United States. We collaborated with SVA and VFW to make this map available to America's veterans, and we certainly appreciate their efforts as well."

Through the "In State 4 Vets" campaign, the VFW and its partners seek to not only highlight the current landscape for veterans in higher education, but also encourage veterans and their advocates to take action on both the local and national levels.

Veterans can share their experiences fighting for in-state tuition via Twitter and Facebook using the hashtag #InState4Vets. The interactive map also offers users the opportunity to contact their legislators, encouraging them to pass in-state tuition protection for veterans.

Twenty states currently have state laws that waive the in-state residency requirement for veterans; seven states have a policy that waive the in-state residency requirements for veterans; and nine states are currently looking at legislation to grant in-state tuition to veterans. To the VFW, this leaves significant room for improvement in ensuring veterans can maximize their educational opportunities.

To learn about the specific circumstances in each state, ways state legislatures seek to address the issue, and ways to take action visit the new virtual map here: www.studentveterans.org/what-we-do/in-state-tuition.html.