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BADGER BENEFITS BRIEF



WISCONSIN



POLICY CHANGE BOOSTS G.I. BILL ELIGIBILITY FOR SOME GUARD, RESERVE MEMBERS

A recent Defense Department policy change widens the eligibility window for some Reserve-component troops who want to use their Montgomery G.I. Bill education benefits. The DoD policy now aligns with Department of Veterans Affairs rules, which say National Guard members and reservists are eligible to receive Montgomery G.I. Bill education benefits for the period covering the amount of time they served on active duty, plus four months.

After studying the matter over the past few months, DoD agreed to align its policy with the VA's. DoD's previous policy only recognized the amount of active-duty time as applied to the G.I. Bill coverage period for reserve component members but still required the member to continue to serve in the Selected Reserve.

"The change, from the DoD perspective, is that the benefit now can be used by somebody that leaves the selected reserve for the amount of time that they've served on active duty, plus four months. Guard and reserve members who attend regular drill training and meetings are considered part of the selected reserve.

The total amount of G.I. Bill coverage for reservists is still 36 months. So, if you've used part of that (G.I. Bill benefit) it may eat into that 36 months. Reservists normally have 14 years to use their Montgomery G.I. Bill benefits. However, that time might also be extended by the amount of time Guard or Reserve members serve on active duty, plus four months.

About 370,000 Guard and Reserve members on drill or active-duty status have signed up to use Montgomery G.I. Bill benefits since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States. The Reserve Education Assistance Program, established by the 2005 National Defense Authorization Act, is another DoD education initiative for members of the Guard and Reserve. To be eligible, service members must have served at least 90 consecutive days of active service after Sept. 11, 2001, in response to a Presidential or Congressional call-up of military forces for wartime or other emergency service. Guard and Reserve members who served for two continuous years on active duty in support of a contingency operation would qualify for both the Montgomery G.I. Bill and REAP and could select which program they want to use. Service members can determine if they qualify for the Montgomery G.I. Bill and REAP by contacting their Wisconsin State Education Office at 608-242-3447.

WOUNDED SERVICE MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES NOW ELIGIBLE FOR A FREE WEEK-LONG RETREAT

The National Military Family Association (NMFA) is now accepting applications for a free getaway vacation for wounded service members and their families. Working in partnership with The Blewitt Foundation, NMFA will select participants to embark on Destination R&R. The Blewitt Foundation created Destination R&R to honor the sacrifice of wounded service members and their families and to provide them with the opportunity for family rejuvenation and fun. The first Destination R&R retreat will be held this summer, from August 5 to 9, at the Turf Valley Resort, near Baltimore, MD. It will focus on fun for all ages and enable sharing, connecting and healing for families. All expenses will be paid for the selected participants, including travel. This retreat is offered to service members of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard who were wounded or experienced emotional trauma or illness related to their service in the Global War on Terror. Members of the National Guard and Reserve in either activated or drilling status are eligible, provided their injury was sustained while on active duty or training. Apply now. Applications are only accepted online, www.nmfa.org/destinationRR <http://www.nmfa.org/site/R?i=-SBSscCo_ZmxVArML7eAZ_Q> and must be submitted by midnight May 4, 2007.

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