

South Carolina Commission on Higher Education

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May 3, 2018

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chairman Tim Hofferth and Members, SC Commission on Higher Education

FROM: Chairman Paul O. Batson, III, and Members, Committee on Access & Equity and Student Services

Introduction

South Carolina Commission on Higher Education State Approving Agency's overview of the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017, (Public Law 115-48, Section 112), and the Veteran Apprenticeship and Labor Opportunity Reform (VALOR) Act, (H.R. 3949).

Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017, (Public Law 115-48, Section 112), was signed into legislation on August 16, 2017.

Background

As higher education continues to evolve, the ways students are learning and the courses they are pursuing in modern-day society differs from even a decade ago. Although the GI Bill has been enhanced since its enactment in 1944, there are still many types of training and education programs that are still not accessible to student veterans through the GI Bill. Furthermore, recent data has shown that student veterans are succeeding at a higher rate than their non-veteran peers, and it is in the country's best interest to continue to invest in these veterans and service members.

The Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017, would improve and extend GI Bill benefits granted to veterans, their surviving spouses and dependents. This bill removes time restrictions to use the GI Bill, enabling future eligible recipients to use their GI bill benefits for their entire lives, as opposed to the current 15-year timeline. It also simplifies the benefit for future service members by consolidating the GI Bill into a single program over time, which reduces VA's administrative costs.

The legislation provides significant increases in GI Bill funding for Reservists and Guardsmen, dependents, surviving spouses and surviving dependents. It also provides 100% GI Bill eligibility to Post 9/11 Purple Heart recipients. In addition, this bill restores eligibility for service members their school closes in the middle of a semester and creates a pilot program that would pay for veterans to take certain high technology courses.

The **Veteran Apprenticeship and Labor Opportunity Reform (VALOR) Act, H.R. 3949** was signed into legislation on November 21, 2017.

Background

The Post-9/11 GI Bill authorizes a number of on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs. These programs can greatly expand veterans' career opportunities in a wide range of professional industries with specific, hands-on training that is atypical of a standard two- or four-year school.

The approval process for a GI Bill-approved apprenticeship program maybe unnecessarily burdensome. Under current law, a private employer looking to offer an apprenticeship in multiple states must register separately with each state approval agency. This process often discourages many companies from offering apprenticeships.

The VALOR Act simplifies this approval process by allowing companies to register their apprenticeship programs with one central approval agency. This will make it easier for companies to create apprenticeships, creates more opportunities for veterans to gain meaningful employment in the future. In addition, this bill will help streamline the GI Bill apprenticeship program by eliminating the mandatory second signature requirement that adds unnecessary delays in providing apprenticeship payments to veterans.

Summary

The Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017 legislation will provide further assistance to South Carolina veterans in managing and utilizing their GI Bill benefits. With the removal of the Post 9/11 GI Bill timeline of 15 years to use VA Educational benefits, South Carolina veterans and those eligible will have the opportunity to take the necessary time to select an educational institution that would best meet their educational, professional or vocational objectives, and if employed, their work schedule.

The VALOR Act will better assist employers, veterans, and the State Approving Agency with the approval and enrollment process that previously could take months to approve. Inasmuch, the VALOR Act will also better assist the VA in processing the enrollment application from veterans and eligible individuals in a timely manner. The VALOR Act would expedite payment to South Carolina veterans and others to receive their VA benefits.

Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017

- Named after the original architect of the first GI Bill, considered one of the most transformational pieces of legislation in United States history.
- The 15-year time limitation to use Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits is eliminated for Veterans who left active duty on or after January 1, 2013, children who became eligible for the Fry Scholarship on or after January 1, 2013, and all Fry scholarship eligible spouses.
- The VA is now authorized to *restore* benefits and provide relief to Veterans affected by school closures or disapprovals.

Harry W. Colmery

Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017- Continued

- Reservists who had eligibility under the Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP) and lost it due to the program sunset provision will have that service credited toward the Post-9/11 GI Bill program.
- Anyone eligible for GI Bill can use their benefits at an accredited independent study program at an area career and technical school, or a postsecondary vocational school providing postsecondary level education. These programs will go through the normal course of approval by the appropriate State Approving Agency.
- The VA will help Veterans to clearly identify schools that offer them priority enrollment.

Veterans Apprenticeship and Labor Opportunity Reform Act (VALOR Act)

- H.R. 3949 was introduced October 4, 2017 and became law November 21, 2017.
- The Act streamlines the approval process for on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs under the GI Bill.
- Specifically, the bill allows an employers' apprenticeship program that is registered and approved by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) or State apprenticeship agency (Apprenticeship Carolina), to be approved by the State Approving Agency (SAA) in the state where its headquarters are located and allow this approval to apply to other states, eliminating the need for employers to seek approval in each state where the employer is located.

Veterans Apprenticeship and Labor Opportunity Reform Act (VALOR Act)

- The SAA in the state where an apprenticeship is located will continue to be the authority for all non-approval purposes such as designation of certifying officials.
- Employers are required to maintain records electronically in DOL's RAPIDS database.
- Currently, SC SAA has not received any employer requests for approval under the Act. Potential industries include interstate commerce carriers and Mercedes Benz USA, which has a "Certified Systems Technician" program that is approved in FL, TX, CA and MA but requires approval of its' USA headquarters in GA to meet VALOR Act criteria.
- The bill also removes the requirement for a signature from the trainee on VA Form 22-6553d-1. Only the certifying official's signature is required to submit the veteran's monthly hours worked to the VA for payment of benefits.

Apprenticeship (APP)

- APP programs usually range from two to five years in length.
- Eligible veterans/employees are in training, performing a new job, and earning wages.
- Benefits for training is based on 120 hours or more worked each month.

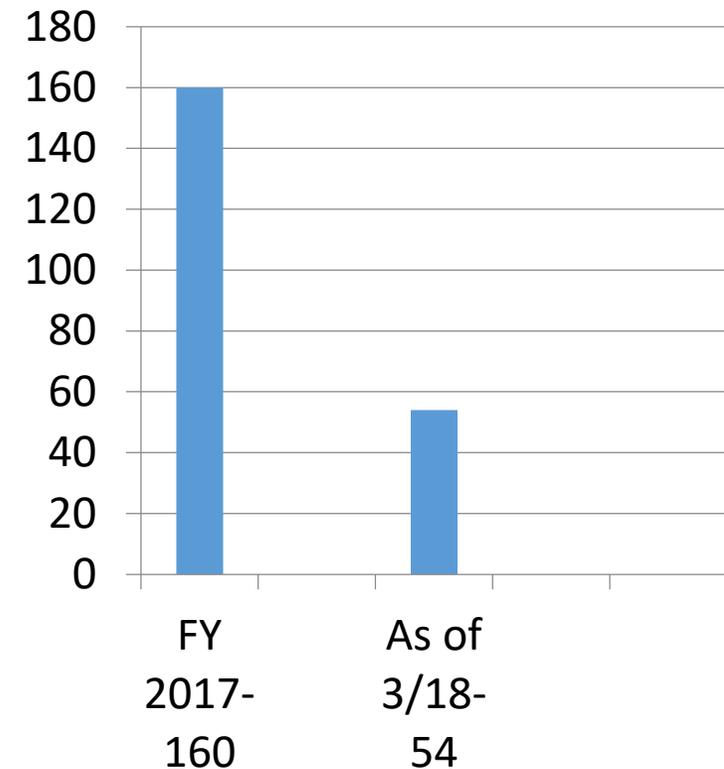
On-the-Job Training (OJT)

- OJT is training received while actually performing a job and earning wages, in addition to receiving GI Bill benefits.
- OJT programs normally range from six months to two years of full-time training.
- Eligible veterans/employees are in training, performing a new job, and earning wages.
- Benefits for training are based on 120 hours or more worked each month.

Technical Assistance with APP/OJT Enrollment Applications

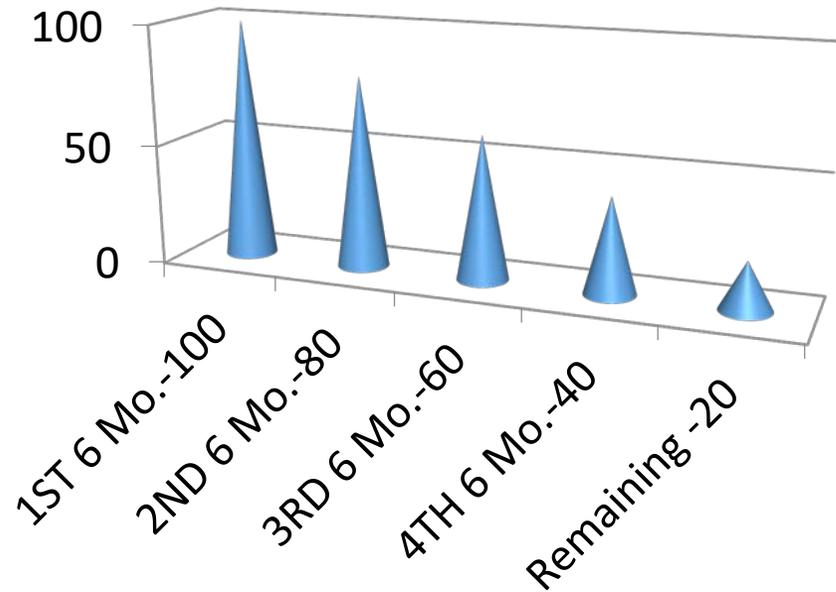
- The South Carolina Commission on Higher Education State Approving Agency is one of four states that actually provides technical assistance in completing the required approval documents and enrollment application for SC employers and veterans.
- The SAA reviews all On-the-Job Training (OJT) enrollment applications to ensure accurate completion.
- The technical assistance helps the VA Claims Department process enrollment applications without delay.

Processed Veteran enrollments

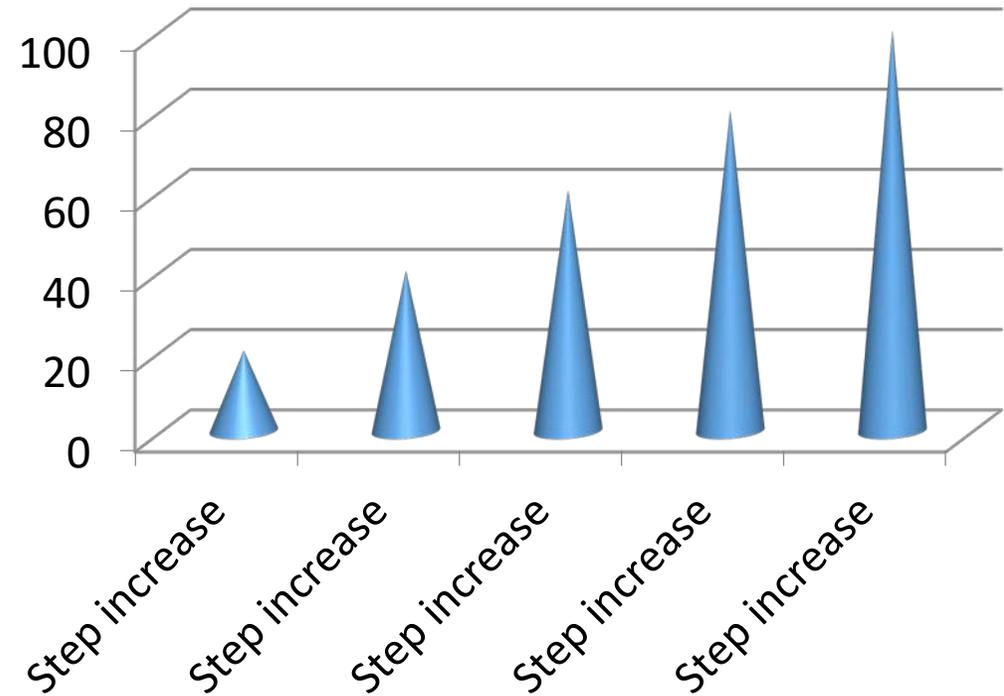


Apprenticeship and On-the-Job Training Rates

VA Incremental Payment Periods



Employer/Training Establishment

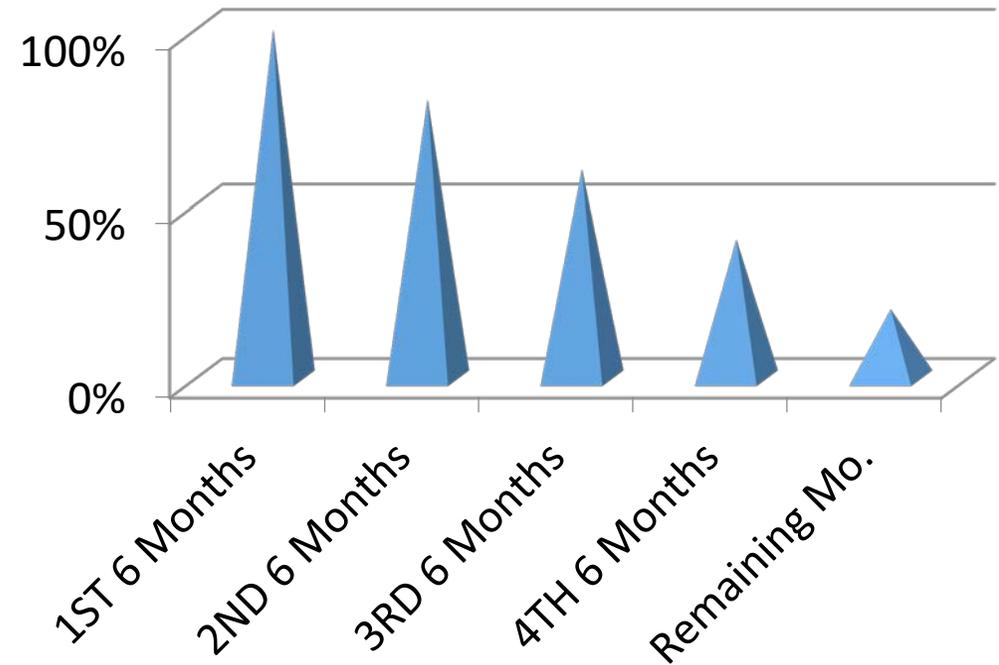


Post 9/11 SC Top 6 Military Housing Payment Rates

SC Top 6 Military Housing Payment Rates

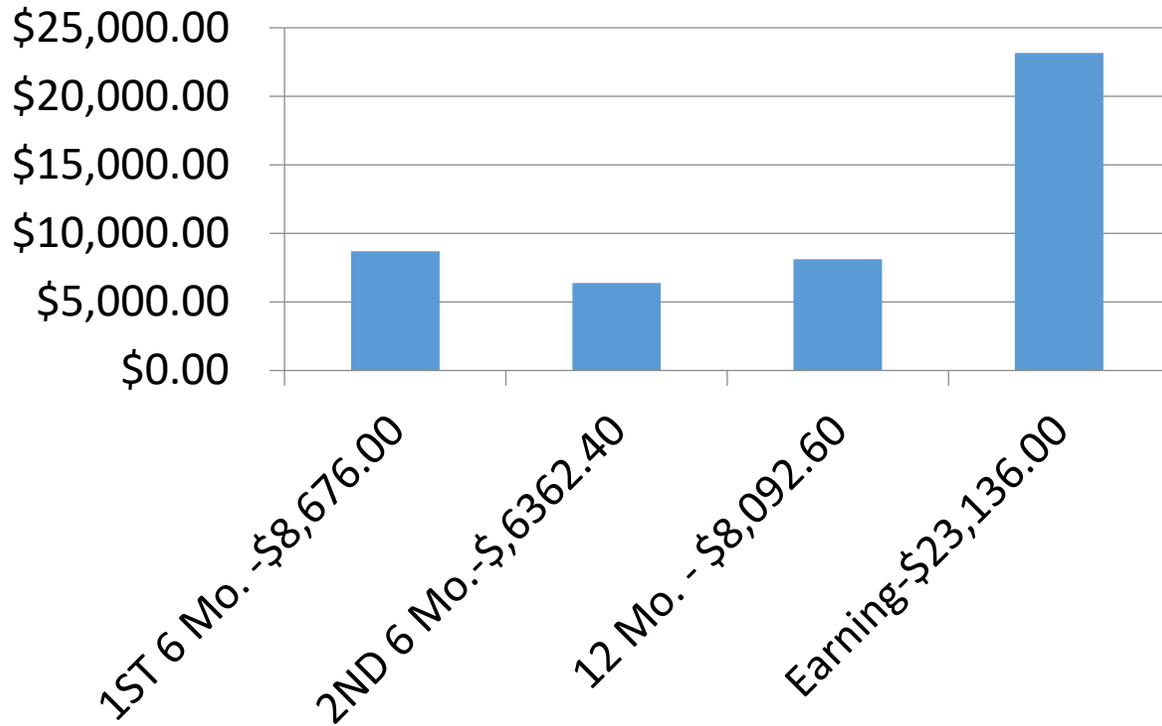
Location	With Dependents	No Dependent
Beaufort	\$1,623.00	\$1323.00
Charleston	\$1,626.00	\$1,383.00
Columbia	\$1,470.00	\$1,233.00
Greenville	\$1,341.00	\$1,125.00
Rock Hill/Charlotte	\$1,320.00	\$1,125.00
Myrtle Beach	\$1,563.00	\$1,281.00

SC Top 6 Military Housing Payment Rates

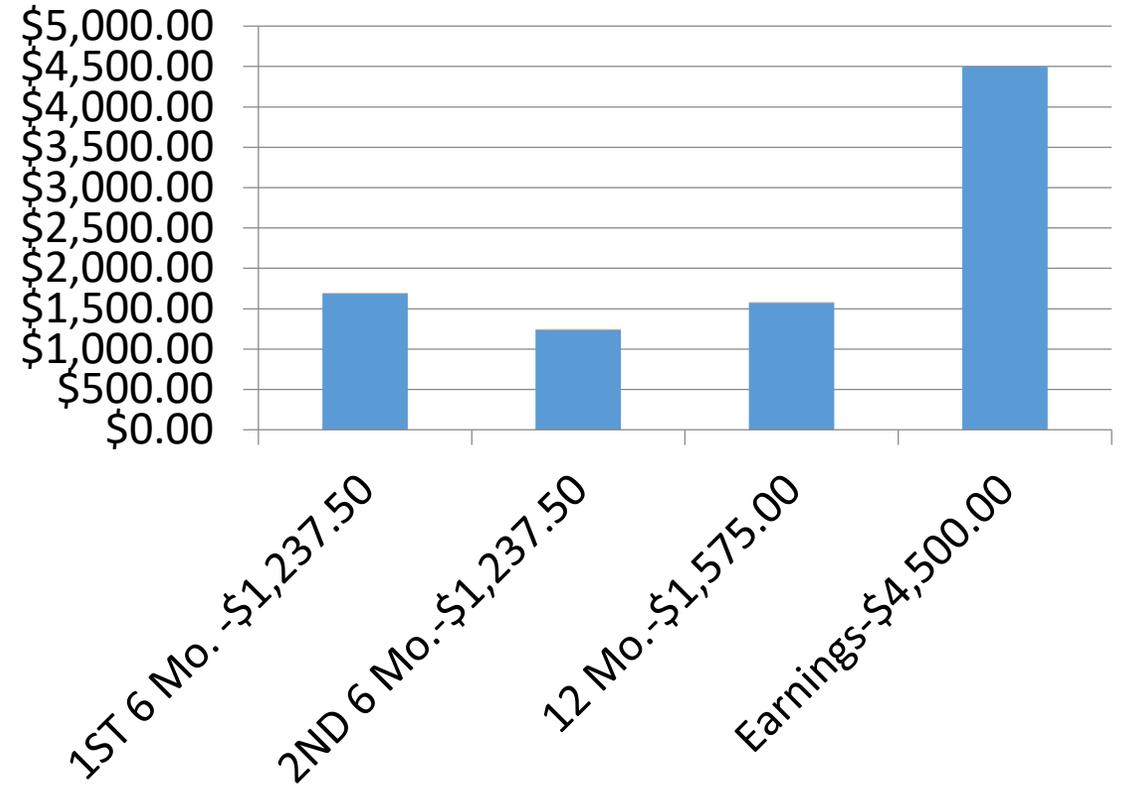


VA APP/OJT GI Bill Payment Rates

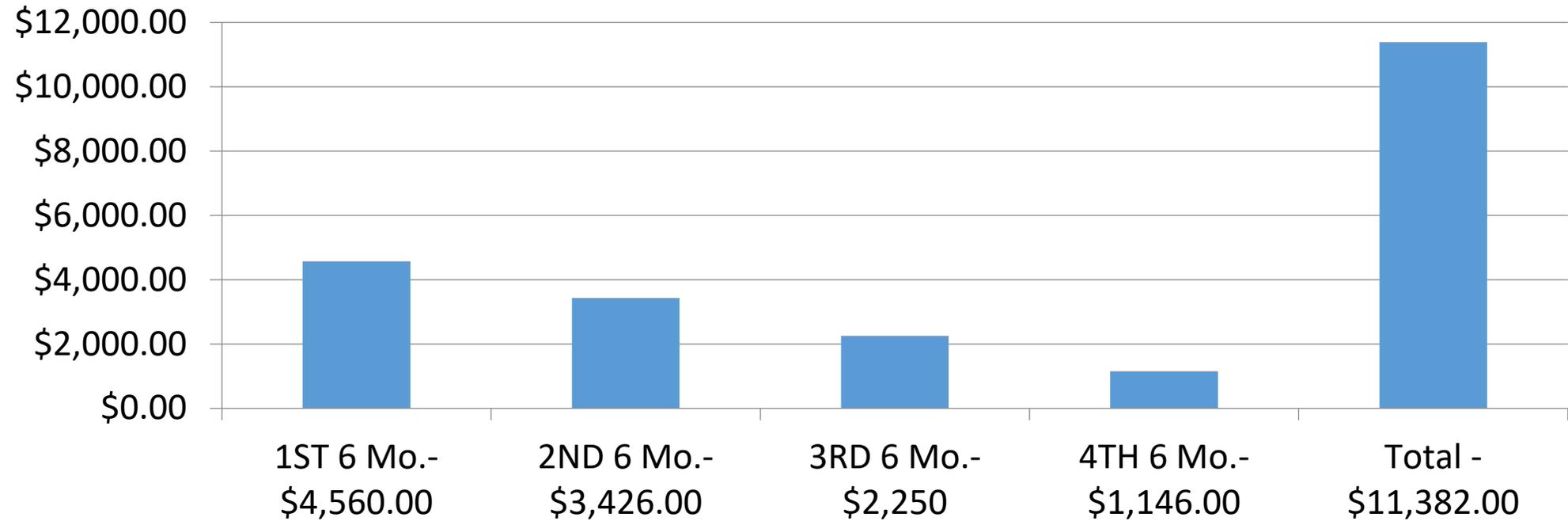
Chapter 30 - 24 Month Training Program



Chapter 1606 -24 Months Training Program



Chapter 35 / Dependents VA APP/OJT GI Bill Payment Rates



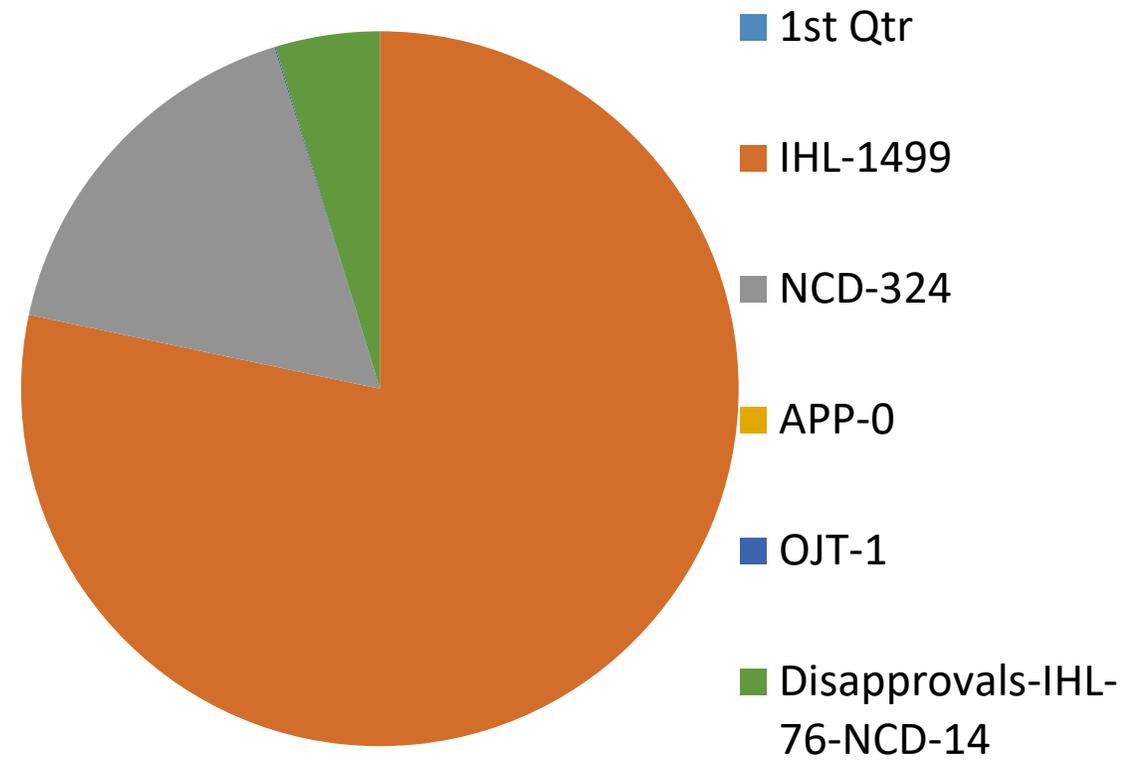
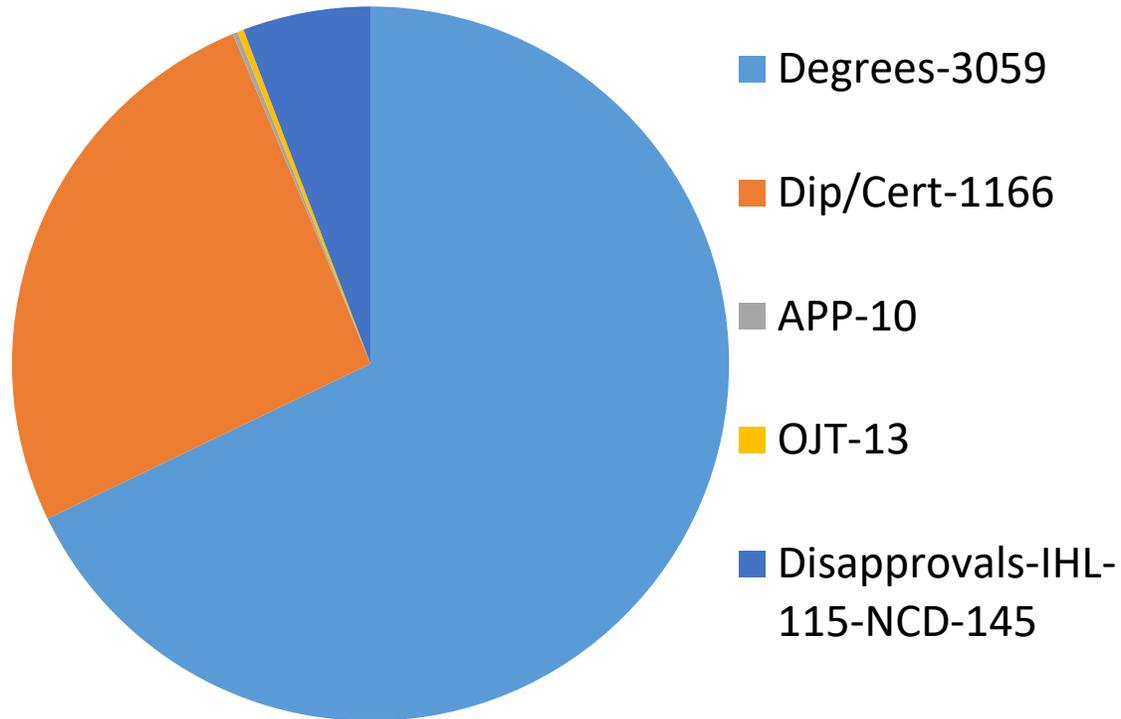
Program Approvals

FY 2017

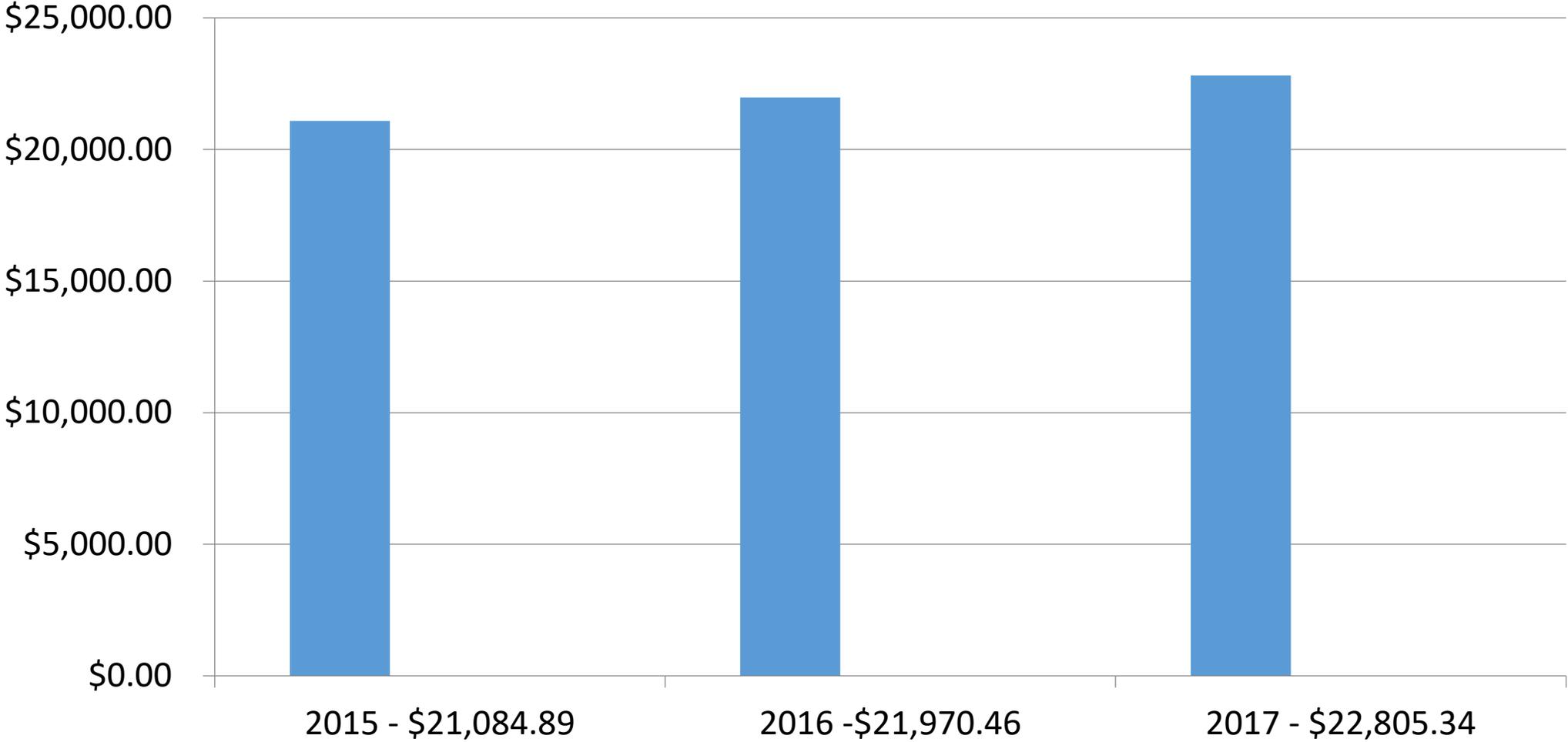
FY 2018

FY 2017 Program Approvals

Program Approvals

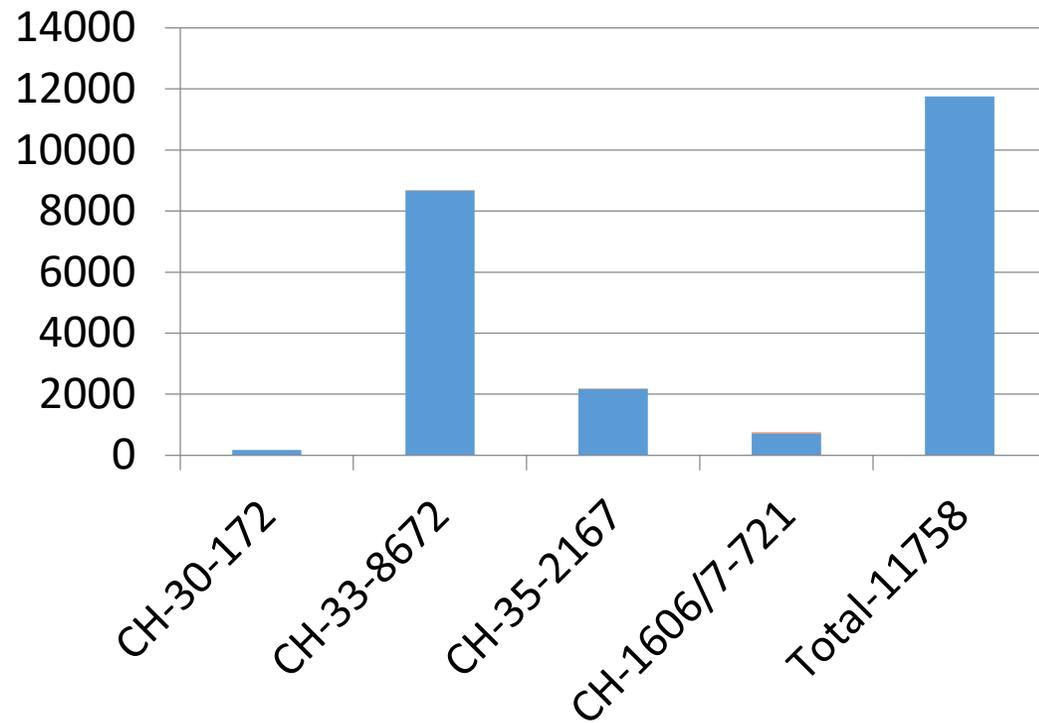


Department of Veterans - Post 9/11 GI Bill Tuition Rates for the Academic Years - 2015, 2016 and 2017

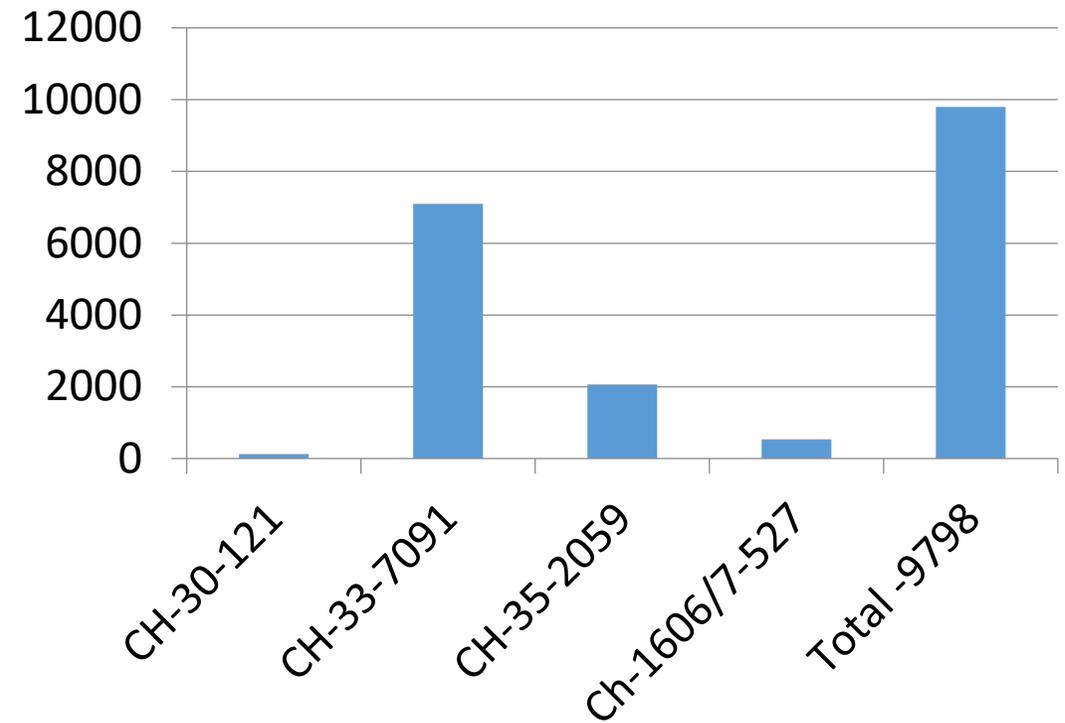


South Carolina Veterans, Selected Reserves and Dependents Receiving GI Bill Benefits

Reported on April 30, 2017



As of February 28, 2018



QUESTIONS

