

*Idea Promoted by President Bush in the State of the Union*

*44 Original Cosponsors of H.R. 5229*

Washington, DC—Today, U.S. Representatives Steve Israel (D- NY) and Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD) introduced a bipartisan, bicameral bill, H.R. 5229, to allow military service personnel to transfer unused GI Bill education benefits to their spouses or children. President Bush expressed his support for such a proposal in his 2008 State of the Union speech by asking Congress to “join me in...allowing our troops to transfer their unused education benefits to their spouses or children.” 42 members have joined Bartlett and Israel as original cosponsors of H.R. 5229, including 23 Democrats and 21 Republicans. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) introduced identical legislation in the Senate, S. 2575, which has 17 cosponsors.

“I hold frequent forums for military families and this is a common-sense idea I hear over and over again,” said Congressman Israel. “Just as military personnel and their families have undergone shared sacrifice to keep our country safe, they should have the option of sharing the benefits of this sacrifice. What better gift can servicemembers pass along to their spouses or loved ones than the gift of education?”

Congressman Bartlett said, “It’s only fair to allow our service members to use the full amount of the GI Bill benefits they have earned. I think this bill will also save money. The ability to transfer unused benefits to a spouse or children could make a critical difference to senior NCOs and officers who might otherwise leave the military because they can’t afford to send them to college. With the support of the President, a bipartisan Senate bill and eager support from our colleagues, I am hopeful that it can become law.”

Bartlett and Israel’s legislation builds upon a popular pilot program included in Public Law 107-107 that allowed individuals with critical Military Occupation Specialty (MOS) to transfer unused GI education benefits to their dependents.

This new effort provides Congress a timely and meaningful opportunity to extend educational assistance to more of the men and women in our Armed Forces and their dependents through the following provisions:

- 1) Allowing Active Duty Servicemembers to transfer any unused portion of their GI benefits to their dependent(s)
- 2) Allowing Reserve and Guard Servicemembers to transfer any unused portion of their GI benefits to their dependent(s)

The bill is supported by veteran advocacy organizations including: National Military Family Association of America (NMFA), Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), and the

American Legion. The ability to transfer unused GI education benefits consistently ranks in the “top 5” concerns raised by military families in focus groups conducted by U.S Army’s Enlisted Career Systems Division over the past five years.

LIST OF ORIGINAL CO-SPONSORS OF H.R. 5229: Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD), Steve Israel (D-NY), John Boozman (R-AR), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Allyson Schwartz (D-PA), John Carter (R-TX), Ciro Rodriguez (D-TX), Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ), Rob Bishop (R-UT), Jeff Miller (R-FL), Elijah Cummings (D-MD), Adam Schiff (D-CA), Bart Gordon (D-TN), Mark Udall (D-CO), Joe Wilson (R-SC), Keith Ellison (D-MN), Mark Kirk (R-IL), Hank Johnson (D-GA), Randy Kuhl (R-NY), Al Wynn (D-MD), Kendrick Meek (D-FL), G.K. Butterfield (D-NC), Virginia Foxx (R-NC), Gabrielle Giffords (D-AZ), Carol Shea-Porter (D-NH), Chris Carney (D-PA), Dave Loebsack (D-IA), Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX), Wayne Gilchrest (R-MD), Corinne Brown (D-FL), Walter Jones (R-NC), Baron Hill (D-IN), Nita Lowey (D-NY), Shelley Berkley (D-NV), Randy Neugebauer (R-TX), Tim Walz (D-MN), Steve King (R-IA), Pat Tiberi (R-OH), Patrick McHenry (R-NC), Frank Wolf (R-VA), Jack Kingston (R-GA), Ron Paul (R-TX), Virgil Goode (R-VA), and Jim Saxton (R-NJ).