

Purple Heart Veterans Education Act
Sens. Patty Murray (D-WA) and Thom Tillis (R-NC)

Established in 1944, the GI Bill provides active-duty servicemembers and veterans with higher education and training. In 2017, Congress passed the Forever GI Bill, which incentivized servicemembers to continue their service in the military by allowing them to transfer their GI bill benefits to their dependents after they completed six years of service and agreed to serve an additional four. In 2018, the Department of Defense (DoD) expanded GI Bill transferability benefits to Purple Heart recipients, allowing them to transfer them to their dependents while on active duty. While this policy honors most wounded warriors, it leaves behind a small group of those who received their Purple Hearts after being discharged from the military.

These veterans, who received the same honor for their service, do not have the privilege of passing down their well-earned benefits to their loved ones. For example, one servicemember suffered a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) after multiple missile attacks barraged his base. At the time, his injury was downplayed, even though his symptoms included memory loss, changes in mood, and chronic migraines. As his symptoms persisted, he fell behind in his civilian career and eventually had to medically retire from the military. More than two years later, DoD finally recognized the severity of his TBI and awarded him with the Purple Heart. Since he was already medically retired at the time of the award ceremony, he cannot transfer his GI Bill benefits to his daughter, who hopes to go to college after graduating high school.

The *Purple Heart Veterans Education Act* would close this loophole by allowing veterans who received their Purple Heart after their service to transfer their benefits to their dependents. Specifically, the legislation would:

- Permit an individual awarded the Purple Heart for service in the Armed Force on or after September 11, 2001, to transfer their educational benefits to one or more of their dependents.
- Allow flexibility by permitting the veteran to allocate different amounts, totaling 36 months of benefits to each of their dependents. For example, one dependent may be designated 20 months and the other 16 months.
- Protect the veteran's right to their benefits by prohibiting the use of their educational benefits to be treated as marital property or the asset of a marital estate.
- Honor the veteran's legacy by allowing their dependents to continue using the unused benefits after their death.

###