

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 2, 2012

The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki
Department of Veterans Affairs
801 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shinseki:

We write to express our deep concern about the growing trend of deceptive practices being used by some for-profit colleges and universities to recruit veterans. Specifically, the phrase "GI Bill" is being used as a marketing tool by a number of for-profit schools to attract prospective students into programs that overpromise the benefits of their classes or charge exorbitant fees. To combat this growing problem, we strongly urge the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to file a trademark application with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office for the phrase "GI Bill."

By securing a federal trademark, the VA would be able to exert control over how the phrase "GI Bill" is used. For example, the VA would have the discretion to permit legitimate websites or entities to use the phrase "GI Bill" to inform veterans about education benefits in an impartial and comprehensive manner.

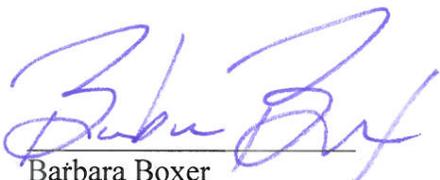
At the same time, a federal trademark would prevent the phrase "GI Bill" from being used in misleading or dishonest marketing campaigns. A recent investigation by the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions found that many for-profit schools are using predatory recruiting practices and false advertising to encourage veterans to enroll in their institutions, despite having low student success rates and high costs. A trademark would help bring this to an end.

Since 1944, the phrase "GI Bill" has been a symbol of our nation's obligation to give back to those who serve. Any attempt to mislead veterans into using these hard-earned benefits for substandard or overpriced programs should not be tolerated. As such, we ask that you trademark the phrase "GI Bill" to help ensure that our veterans are not unfairly targeted.

The federal government regularly protects phrases such as "American Veterans," and names of federal benefit programs like "Medicare" and "Social Security." We feel strongly that the phrase "GI Bill" should also be protected.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

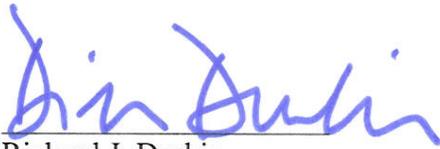
Sincerely,



Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



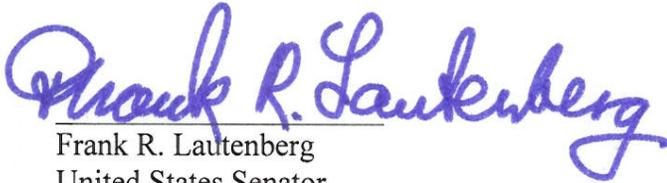
Tom Harkin
United States Senator



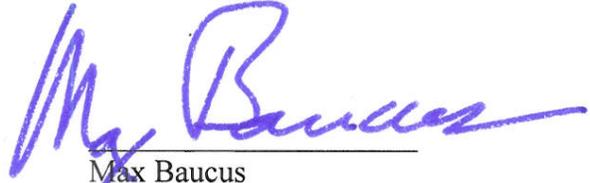
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Barbara A. Mikulski
United States Senator



Frank R. Lautenberg
United States Senator



Max Baucus
United States Senator



Claire McCaskill
United States Senator



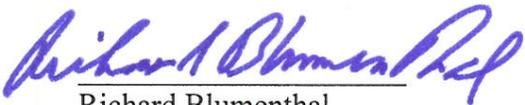
Ron Wyden
United States Senator



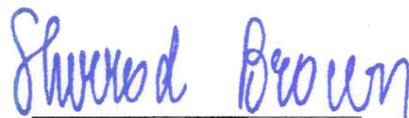
Mark Begich
United States Senator



Al Franken
United States Senator



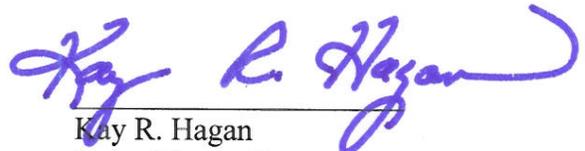
Richard Blumenthal
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Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Tim Johnson
United States Senator



Kay R. Hagan
United States Senator