

Reps. McDowell, Meadows, Bauer, Booher, Terry Brown, Byrnes, Constan, Cushingberry, Dean, Durhal, Geiss, Genetski, Gonzales, Gregory, Hammel, Rick Jones, Robert Jones, Lahti, LeBlanc, Lemmons, Liss, Marleau, Mayes, Opsommer, Pearce, Polidori, Proos, Roberts, Segal, Slavens, Smith, Spade, Tyler, Valentine, Leland and Lipton offered the following resolution:

House Resolution No. 81.

A resolution to urge Michigan's public institutions of higher education to adopt veteran-friendly policies.

Whereas, Beginning in the Fall 2009 semester, veterans of the United States military will have at their disposal education resources under the 21st Century GI Bill. This new educational program will cover the entire cost of in-state tuition as well as educational and living expenses of veterans seeking a college degree. This new program is a well-deserved benefit for the members of our volunteer military who have shouldered the burden of defending our country; and

Whereas, Our higher education institutions could implement a number of policies that would make Michigan a leading candidate for veterans seeking a college education. Offering in-state tuition rates to all veterans who have not been dishonorably discharged, regardless of their state of residence, would be a tremendous incentive. Other policies and programs that would assist veterans with their unique needs and background include the establishment of Veteran Syndicate Offices to assist veterans in utilizing their federal benefits, help students who continue to serve in the Guard or Reserves balance school and military obligations, and provide resources and a social network for adjusting to civilian college life. Other policies that would facilitate enrollment in Michigan colleges and universities include participating in the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges system to ensure that credit transfer opportunities are not lost, establishing an extended application deadline, and waiving application fees. Such policies would help veterans better coordinate their end of active duty service with the college year to avoid losing time and opportunities; and

Whereas, Veterans have a tremendous variety of options in programs and educational settings offered by Michigan's public colleges and universities. However, if coming to a Michigan college or university will leave veteran students with student loan debts disproportionate to what they would have in other states, or if the application process is too difficult to navigate in a timely fashion, many will not choose Michigan as their post-military service destination. Already, just among the Big Ten schools, Michigan ranks at the bottom for veterans on campus. And Ohio is offering in-state tuition rates for veterans. A comprehensive approach to welcoming and retaining veterans as students on our campuses is needed to ensure that Michigan benefits from the 21st Century GI Bill and to make sure veterans benefit from our world-class educational institutions. In an era when Michigan seeks a better educated workforce for the new knowledge-based economy, attracting motivated, patriotic, and talented military veterans to our state will pay dividends to Michigan tomorrow and for decades to come; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives, That we urge Michigan's public institutions of higher education to adopt veteran-friendly policies; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the presidents and boards of control of Michigan's public institutions of higher education.