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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Legion: Keep military tuition program alive

WASHINGTON (March 20, 2013) -- The American Legion has delivered to three members of Congress letters of support for legislation to continue funding college tuition assistance programs provided by U.S. military service branches. Four of the five service branches announced this month that the programs would be suspended, as casualties of federal spending cuts under sequestration.

In letters presented Tuesday night to Rep. Ted Poe, R-Texas, and Sens. Kay Hagan, D-N.C., and James Inhofe, R-Okla., American Legion National Commander James E. Koutz applauded new legislation they have introduced that would extend funding for the programs through the end of fiscal year 2013.

“Military Tuition Assistance is a critical investment in America’s servicemembers,” Koutz said. “It allows them to continue their education and develop their skills while still serving on active duty. Maintaining a professionally educated military is a critical component to ensuring that the United States is well defended and that our nation receives well-educated transitioning veterans who strengthen our economy after discharge.”

The leader of the nation’s largest wartime veterans service organization wrote in the letters that, “The American Legion supports passage of (your) important legislation, and applauds your leadership in addressing this critical issue...”

Rep. Poe’s proposed legislation offers continued funding of military tuition assistance by restricting foreign aid payments to Pakistan.

In early March, The U.S. Marine Corps announced plans to suspend enrollments in its program that provides financial aid for those pursuing their degrees while in the service. The U.S. Air Force, Army and Coast Guard followed suit within days. The U.S. Navy, for the time being, is holding fast with Deputy Chief of Naval Operations Vice Adm. Scott Van Buskirk announcing that tuition assistance for sailors will be funded until at least September of this year.

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