

CHAMPLAIN COLLEGE

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Testimony before the House General, Housing & Military Affairs Committee on H.72
An act relating to the Vermont National Guard Educational Assistance Program

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Here are some points I would like to bring up for the committees consideration. First and foremost is choice. It is important for service members to have a choice when it comes to higher education. Many of those currently serving in the VTNG can be placed in the adult learner category. They have families, a full time job, and all of the responsibilities and distractions that come with adulthood. In addition, not all new recruits are college ready when they join and choose to defer their education to a later time. I know this because I was that young kid who joined not knowing what he wanted to do with his life. It wasn't until a few years on in my military career that I realized I wanted to get an education but by that time I had a wife, a young daughter, a mortgage, a full time job and a whole lot more responsibility. I attained a bachelor's degree and a master's degree through unconventional means, taking classes online and a night. Private institutions were key in attaining my educational goals.

Private schools offer the flexibility and course diversity that state schools can't always offer. For example VSC offers online education, but pales in comparison to the number of degree programs that schools like Champlain and Norwich offer

As that young student I also discovered the commitment that private schools in Vermont made to military service members. Were it not for the Buxton Scholarship that St. Michael's College offered to VTNG members I would not have been able to go to school and complete a master's degree. The commitment to the VTNG among private colleges in Vermont continues, Norwich University offers a reduced tuition rate to military members, St. Mike's continues to offer the Buxton Scholarship and Champlain has just extended its truED program to the VTNG which reduced our per credit cost for online courses from \$641 to \$167/CH for undergraduate programs. In addition Champlain spends \$818,000 in institutional scholarships, which includes \$250K in YR funds.

The track record among private schools in Vermont, and Champlain in particular, of relevant programs, career success and critical skill development is an attractive option for many National Guard students. We would like to be able to help Guard members leverage the power of a Champlain education, in addition to the options available through the VSC.

As a soldier I appreciated what private schools offered to me as a service member. Now that I am working in higher Ed I understand what all private schools in Vermont realize: that the amount spent on benefits to our military and veteran students is a small price to pay for the tremendous impact that this student population has on our Faculty, staff and student body. Therefore I ask that you consider supporting Guard member's choice to pursue education at Vermont's private institutions, like Champlain, by not limiting educational benefits only to the University of Vermont or Vermont State Colleges.



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