

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETION OF PHS-6273
"MONTGOMERY GI BILL ELECTION AND STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING"**

PLEASE READ THE PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT ON PAGE 2 OF THE FORM AND
THESE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY BEFORE COMPLETING FORM PHS-6273.

YOU MUST READ, COMPLETE, AND SUBMIT THE COMPLETED PHS-6273. FAILURE TO COMPLETE THIS FORM PROPERLY MAY RESULT IN THE DEDUCTION OF \$1,200 FROM YOUR PAY. THE DEDUCTED MONEY WILL NOT BE REFUNDED.

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) administers several different educational benefit programs. The program for which you are eligible depends upon the date that you **first** entered on extended active duty with one of the Uniformed Services (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, Public Health Service (PHS) Commissioned Corps, or the Commissioned Corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), and the number of years you serve on active duty. The eligibility criteria for the three major VA programs are described below.

UNDER LAW, YOU CANNOT BE ELIGIBLE FOR MORE THAN ONE OF THESE PROGRAMS AT A TIME.

VEAP (Post-Vietnam Era Veterans Educational Assistance Program) (Chapter 32, Title 38, United States Code)--If you initially entered on active duty between January 1, 1977 through June 30, 1985, and were not eligible for Vietnam Era GI Bill benefits, you were eligible for this program. No new enrollments may be made in this program at this time.

MONTGOMERY GI BILL (Chapter 30, Title 38, United States Code)--If you **initially** entered on active duty on or after July 1, 1985, and have no prior active duty Uniformed Service time (except for short tours of active duty for training, such as an officer in the Commissioned Officer Student Training and Extern Program (COSTEP), you are eligible to participate in this program.

VIETNAM ERA GI BILL--Individuals who served on active duty for 180 consecutive days prior to January 1, 1977, and had remaining entitlement on December 31, 1989, may also be eligible for Montgomery GI Bill benefits if they satisfy certain eligibility criteria.

IF YOU ARE ELIGIBLE FOR THE MONTGOMERY GI BILL, READ THE REMAINDER OF THIS MATERIAL CAREFULLY BEFORE YOU COMPLETE FORM PHS-6273.

THE INFORMATION PROVIDED BELOW APPLIES **ONLY** TO THE MONTGOMERY GI BILL.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Montgomery GI Bill is an educational benefit program, administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), to provide a significant amount of money for Servicemembers to use for advanced training and education. Officers initially called to active duty (other than active duty for training) on or after July 1, 1985, are eligible to participate in this program.

Benefits are payable to the Servicemember in monthly payments of \$816 or \$1,004 (rates effective as of October 2004) over a period of up to 36 months for use in training programs accredited for VA training purposes. A wide variety of training programs are approved for use. These include educational and vocational programs. Check with your local VA office for information about approved courses.

HOW TO QUALIFY FOR BENEFITS

You qualify for benefits by enrolling in the Montgomery GI Bill and having \$1,200 deducted from your pay at the rate of \$100 per month for the first 12 consecutive months you serve on extended active duty. In addition to your monetary deductions, you must agree to serve on active duty for either 24 or 36 months, **after being enrolled in the program**, and you must complete that period of active duty successfully to use your Montgomery GI Bill benefits. NOTE: Members on active duty who agree to remain on active duty for 36 months can start using their benefits after completing 24 months of continuous active duty.

DETERMINING THE AMOUNT OF YOUR BENEFIT

The amount of the monthly benefit you *receive* is based on the active-duty service **commitment** to which you obligate yourself when you first come on active duty and elect to participate in the Montgomery GI Bill, your student status, i.e., full time, half time, etc., and, in the case of Servicemembers who commit to a 2-year obligation, when you begin using your benefits.

If you commit to an active duty obligation of 2 years when you enroll in the Montgomery GI Bill, you will be eligible to receive the minimum benefit per month (for full-time student status) after 24 months of continuous active duty. However, if you remain on active duty continuously for 36 months, you will then be eligible to receive the maximum benefit per month for full-time student status.

If you commit to an active duty obligation of 3 years when you enroll in the Montgomery GI Bill, you will be eligible to receive the maximum benefit per month (for full-time student status) after 24 months of continuous active duty.

If you satisfy the eligibility criteria, you will be eligible for a total of 36 months of benefits. **This obligation is separate from, and served concurrently with, any other Service obligation you may have for other reasons.** If you fail to complete your Montgomery GI Bill obligation, you will lose your eligibility for these educational benefits and **will not be eligible for a refund of the \$1,200 deducted from your pay.** (However, you can reestablish your eligibility for benefits if you return to active duty and remain for the **full** obligated period.) Once you incur an obligation, you cannot change it. For example, if you sign up for 3 years, you cannot change the obligation to 2 years at a later date.

(continued)

LEAVING THE PHS COMMISSIONED CORPS PRIOR TO FULFILLING YOUR ACTIVE-DUTY OBLIGATION

As stated earlier, you will lose your eligibility for Montgomery GI Bill benefits if:

1. You voluntarily leave active duty prior to serving the full amount of time to which you obligated yourself; or
2. Your appointment as a PHS commissioned officer is terminated due to poor performance or misconduct on your part prior to your having completed your service obligation.

There are two exceptions to the above:

1. If you are released from active duty due to a Service-connected disability prior to completing your Montgomery GI Bill obligation, you will receive 1 month's benefit for each month you actually served on active duty.
2. If you are released from active duty for the convenience of the Government under the probationary authority, or during a reduction-in-strength due to program cutbacks, and you have served 20 months of a 24-month obligation or 30 months of a 36-month obligation, you will be eligible for the full 36 months of Montgomery GI Bill benefits.

USING THE BENEFIT

You can use your Montgomery GI Bill benefit while still on active duty, or within 10 years of your release from active duty.

If you want to use the benefit while still on active duty, certain conditions will apply.

1. **You must complete at least 24 months of active duty before you can begin using the benefit.**
2. You must be enrolled in an educational program approved for VA training. To learn whether or not a specific program is approved, contact the VA field office in your geographic area.
3. Your benefit will be pro-rated if you are attending school on a less than full time basis. You will receive the maximum benefit allowable (based on whether your Service obligation qualifies you for \$816 or \$1,004 (rates effective as of October 2004)) **or** the actual cost of your tuition and fees if you apply for benefits while on active duty. Even though you will receive a pro-rated payment in this case, you are still entitled to the overall equivalent of 36 months of your benefit for training. The VA maintains a record of your remaining benefit balance.
4. You must notify the Office of Commissioned Corps Operations (OCCO) of your plans to attend school using your Montgomery GI Bill benefits so that OCCO can certify your eligibility to the VA. Obtain the appropriate VA form from your local VA office or the VA Web site-- <http://www.gibill.va.gov> --and submit it to OCCO for certification.
5. There is no provision for a lump-sum payout of your benefit. It will be paid on a monthly basis only.

If you want to use the benefit **after** you leave active duty, the following conditions will apply.

1. You must complete your obligated period of service (2 years or 3 years) for VA educational benefit purposes.
2. You must have an **honorable** discharge from active duty.
3. You must use your benefit within 10 years from the date you leave active duty.
4. The benefit you receive will be pro-rated if you are enrolled in training that is less than full time. Even though you will receive a pro-rated payment in this case, you are still entitled to the equivalent of 36 months of your benefit for training. The VA maintains a record of your remaining educational benefit balance.
5. There is no provision for a lump-sum payout of your benefit. It will be paid on a monthly basis only.
6. If you fail to use all or part of these benefits within 10 years of your last release from active duty, you will not receive a refund for unused benefits.

HOW TO ENROLL

To enroll in the program and start the deductions from your pay, indicate your decision on the election form, PHS-6273, and submit it to the address shown at the bottom of the form.

AUTOMATIC ENROLLMENT

If you fail to complete and submit the form PHS-6273, and orders are issued calling you to active duty, you will be enrolled automatically in the Montgomery GI Bill as if you had elected a 24-month obligation. If this happens, \$1,200 will be deducted from your pay over a 1-year period, and you will **not** be able to receive a refund of the \$1,200 even if you do not subsequently qualify for or use the benefits. Under the automatic enrollment feature, you will be eligible for a maximum monthly benefit of \$816 per month after 24-months of continuous active duty, and \$1,004 per month after 36 months of continuous active duty (rates effective as of October 2004).

NO PARTICIPATION, NO BENEFITS

If you are eligible for the Montgomery GI Bill, but decline participation, you will **not** be eligible for any educational benefits from VA. Your decision to participate or decline participation **must** be made at the time you enter on active duty. The law does not permit you to enroll at a later date. Therefore, the decision you make now will remain in force throughout your service with the PHS Commissioned Corps and any subsequent active duty with another Uniformed Service. A decision not to participate does not affect your eligibility for other VA benefits.

STEPS YOU MUST TAKE NOW

1. We strongly recommend you consider your plans and needs carefully before you decide whether or not you will participate in the Montgomery GI Bill. Many provisions of the Montgomery GI Bill are **irrevocable**, so you will be locked into the decision you make at this time.
2. Complete form PHS-6273, "Montgomery GI Bill Election and Statement of Understanding." Make sure your name and social security number are legible. If we cannot read your writing, it may result in your being automatically enrolled in the program and having \$1,200 deducted from your pay.
3. Keep a photocopy of the election form and these instructions for your records.
4. Submit the completed form to:
Office of Commissioned Corps Operations
Division of Commissioned Corps Assignments
1101 Wootton Parkway
Plaza Level, Suite 100
Rockville, MD 20852
5. If you have further questions about this program, contact OCCO at (240) 453-6034.
6. **IF YOU DO NOT SUBMIT THIS FORM, THE PERSONNEL ORDER CALLING YOU TO ACTIVE DUTY WILL NOT BE ISSUED.**

**Privacy Act Statement for Form PHS-6273
"Montgomery GI Bill Election and Statement of Understanding"**

General: This information is provided pursuant to the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. 552a).

Authority for collection of this information: Our authority to collect this information is 42 U.S.C. 202 et seq.; and Executive Order 9397, "Numbering System for Federal Accounts Relating to Individual Persons."

Purpose: The information you provide on this form will determine whether or not you are enrolled in the Montgomery GI Bill. The information will become a part of your personnel and payroll records and used only as necessary by this Department and the Department of Veterans Affairs in relationship to your participation in the Montgomery GI Bill.

In certain circumstances, this information may be disclosed to academic institutions in which you enroll to verify your eligibility for benefits, to one of the other Uniformed Services if you transfer there from the PHS Commissioned Corps, or to other Federal agencies to which you may apply for educational benefits in order to coordinate all Federal educational benefits. Additional information about how these records are maintained may be obtained by contacting the office to which you submit this form.

Record Systems: 09-40-0001, "PHS Commissioned Corps General Personnel Records," HHS/PSC/HRS, and 09-40-0006, "PHS Commissioned Corps Payroll Records," HHS/PSC/HRS.

Effects of Non-disclosure: You must disclose your Social Security Number to distinguish your records from those of other commissioned officers with similar names and birthdates. If you do not provide the information requested on this form, you will be enrolled automatically in the Montgomery GI Bill educational benefit program and \$1,200 will be deducted from your pay at the rate of \$100 per month for the first 12 months you are on active duty.