

QUESTION: What education benefits are NOAA Corps Officers eligible to apply for?

Background: NOAA Corps Officers may be eligible for GI Bill benefits. Currently, there are two active GI Bill programs, the Montgomery GI Bill and the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Using a GI Bill to pay for academic or technical training is a process that requires the individual to take the lead, but there are many resources available to help you meet your educational goals. This 'How To' guide will not cover the step by step process of using the GI Bill, but will direct you to the available resources. Please note this document's date of publication and check all information against current guidance from the VA before making any decisions related to your GI Bill benefits. CPC has little involvement in this process but will provide any documentation needed by the Department of Veterans Affairs for service verification upon request.

Overview

The Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB): Officers may elect to enroll for the MGIB upon appointment into the NOAA Corps. Officers pay \$1200 either in a lump sum or over for 12 months and are then entitled to receive financial support for up to 36 months of education and housing once they have completed a minimum service obligation of typically three years of active duty. Rates may be found [here](#). Benefits expire 10 years after the end of your service.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill: The Post-9/11 GI Bill provides financial support for up to 36 months of education and housing to officers with at least 90 days of aggregate service on or after September 11, 2001. Rates may be found [here](#). The Post-9/11 GI Bill also provides a transferability benefit for dependents. The Post-9/11 GI Bill requires no monetary buy-in, and its benefits do not expire so long as you completed your service on or after January 1, 2013.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill is generally the more flexible of the two, but in cases where that flexibility is not needed, the Montgomery GI bill may leave you with a larger cash benefit for living expenses after tuition is paid for. However, it is imperative to research these benefits as they relate to your specific situation, as once you choose to use one type of GI bill benefits **you in most cases cannot switch to the other type**. A [comparison document](#) and [comparison tool](#) are available to help. If you paid into the Montgomery GI Bill but decide to use the Post-9/11 GI Bill, in some cases the VA will refund you part or all of your \$1200. Click [here](#) to learn more about the criteria for a refund.

Important Details

Consolidation of Benefit Levels: Percentage of Post-9/11-GI program benefit available depends on time in service. Current rates available [here](#). With some narrow exceptions, Montgomery GI Bill benefits become available after three years on an all-or-nothing basis.

Transferability: The Post-9/11 GI Bill allows service members to transfer their benefits to immediate family members after six years of service, with a commitment to an additional four years. Details and instructions may be found [here](#). Montgomery GI Bill benefits are non-transferable.

Montgomery GI Bill buy-up: You may choose to pay an additional \$600 into the Montgomery GI Bill and receive up to \$5400 in additional benefits. Details can be found [here](#). If you later elect not use the Montgomery GI Bill, the \$600 fee is non-refundable.

Rudsill Decision: A 2024 Supreme Court decision allows members who began service before August 1, 2011 who elected to use the Montgomery GI Bill to convert their remaining benefits to the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Furthermore, if you have two separate periods of service (for example, prior service with another uniformed service branch), you may be able to partially combine your Montgomery and Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits for a total of 48 months of coverage. Details and criteria available [here](#).

Yellow Ribbon Program: At certain schools with costs that exceed the standard post-9/11 GI bill benefit (private colleges, out-of-state universities, etc.) the Yellow Ribbon Program may be able to help pay for some or all additional costs, potentially including additional time to complete your degree. Full program information may be found [here](#).

Veteran Readiness and Employment: Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) is a program exclusive to veterans with a service-connected disability. While it is separate from the GI Bill, it can provide similar educational benefits and in many cases is more generous. Any GI Bill benefits you use will be deducted from your VR&E entitlement; however, as of this writing VR&E benefits used **will not** be deducted from your GI Bill entitlement. For this reason, if you qualify for both programs, it is generally in your best interest to use your VR&E benefits first. Details on VR&E are available [here](#).

How do I start the process to use my GI Bill benefits?

Go to <https://www.va.gov/education/how-to-apply/> and scroll down to the How to Apply Section. Answer the questions about which program you want to use and complete the application. **Once you elect to use either the Montgomery or Post-9/11 GI Bill, your decision is irreversible** except as detailed under the Rudsill Decision heading above.

In many cases, you will receive immediate approval and will be able to download your Certificate of Eligibility (or award letter) right away. You will need to give this to your school's VA liaison. If additional paperwork is needed, work with the school's VA representative and CPC.

If the VA denies your application, you can download your denial letter. The VA will also mail you a copy of your decision letter. In some cases, the VA may need more time to make a decision. If you don't get an automatic decision right after you apply, you'll receive a decision letter in the mail in about 30 days. The VA will contact you if they need more information.

CPC Point of Contact

Active duty NOAA Corps officers with questions or requests related to the GI Bill should open an OPF Online ticket under the "Benefits" category. Former officers may contact Ms. Katherine Raymond at katherine.raymond@noaa.gov or LT Gabriel Johnson at gabriel.johnson@noaa.gov.