



## Legislation Text

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### Res. No. 1328

Resolution calling on the New York State Assembly to pass, and the New York State Senate to introduce and pass a companion bill to, A.8532, an act to amend the education law, in relation to establishing a tuition and fee remission program for veterans.

By Council Members Fidler, Gennaro, Gentile, Mealy, Palma, Sanders Jr. and Weprin

Whereas, Historically, providing tuition benefits to veterans has been a means of helping men and women returning from tours of duty lay the foundation for re-entering the workforce and civilian life; and

Whereas, This assistance is especially important because, during the transition from military to civilian life, veterans may face physical and mental disabilities, as well as economic hardships, all of which can combine to make this transition very difficult; and

Whereas, Having been absent from the workforce for a period of time, or having experienced repeated interruptions in their employment history, it may be especially difficult for veterans to access employment opportunities upon leaving the armed forces; and

Whereas, This reality is borne out by statistics reported by the United States Labor Department, which show that the unemployment rate for veterans aged 20 to 24, including reservists who have been called to active duty, is consistently higher than comparable statistics for non-veterans; and

Whereas, This population represents young men and women who are at a time of their lives when major setbacks in their ability to access jobs and educational opportunities can have far-reaching consequences; and

Whereas, In the near future, thousands of young men and women will be returning from active duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, and will be attempting to re-enter the workforce; and

Whereas, At this time of economic downturn, it is more crucial than ever that assistance be provided to

allow veterans to access institutions of higher learning, so that returning veterans, as well as veterans who served prior to the current conflicts, may gain the skills they need to compete for jobs; and

Whereas, Though there are some federal benefits, such as the G.I. Bill, that may be applied to tuition and other costs associated with attending colleges and universities, according to advocates, these benefits are often not accessed, in part because there are delays in processing benefits; and

Whereas, For example, according to an article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in 2006, at that time more than 118,000 education claims were waiting to be processed by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (“VA”); and

Whereas, In addition, according to the advocacy group Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (“IAVA”), the VA has reported that even though 95% of veterans take the initial step of paying a contribution from their first military paychecks in order to access G.I. Bill benefits down the line, only 8% of veterans use their full G.I. benefit, and 30% of veterans do not use their GI Bill benefit at all; and

Whereas, Given that, according to advocates, tuition benefits are the single most effective tool for recruiting young men and women into the military, problems associated with accessing tuition benefits will have consequences not only for the veterans who seek these benefits, but for future recruitment efforts; and

Whereas, This is especially alarming given that, according to news reports, many of our top military strategists, including Defense Secretary Robert Gates, have stated that there will be a need to increase the number of personnel in the Army and the Marines over the next several years, which corresponds to a need to increase recruitment goals; and

Whereas, A.8532, legislation which has been introduced in the New York State Assembly, would both increase the success of future recruiting efforts as well as help improve the access of veterans to higher education opportunities by creating a State-based remission program to cover the cost of tuition and fees for schools in the State University of New York and in the City University of New York systems; and

Whereas, Such a tuition remission program would also help support our public institutions of higher

learning, which offer state of the art educational opportunities to countless numbers of New York residents who, for financial reasons, do not have access to private colleges and universities; and

Whereas, Such legislation would most importantly send a positive message to New York's veterans that their home state is honoring them for their service to their country, and supporting them as they make the transition from military to civilian life; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the New York State Assembly to pass, and the New York State Senate to introduce and pass a companion bill to, A.8532, an act to amend the education law, in relation to establishing a tuition and fee remission program for veterans.

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