



Adelphi University *Founded 1896*

Garden City, Long Island, New York 11530

(516) 877-3838

THE PRESIDENT

Remembering Veterans: Memorial Day 2007

By Robert A. Scott, President
Adelphi University

On this day to honor those who have given the last full measure of sacrifice, I am reminded of an earlier era when President Franklin Delano Roosevelt said:

...they have been compelled to make greater economic sacrifice and every other kind of sacrifice than the rest of us, and are entitled to definite action to help take care of their special problems. ¹

These words spoken by President Roosevelt echo loudly today, with thousands of U.S. military dead, and thousands more returning from extended duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, including many with permanent scars, lost limbs and emotional trauma - - wounds that would have left them for dead in previous wars.

Those who survive now, as then, face significant challenges in readjusting to civilian life. They often face poor employment prospects because of interrupted careers and schooling, and rapid changes in the civilian economy, while they were being drilled in marksmanship and tactics. For those with serious injuries, even military careers are now out of the question. I believe we have a moral obligation to help them re-integrate successfully into civilian society.

At the end of World War II, President Roosevelt signed into law the “Servicemembers’ Readjustment Act of 1944.” Commonly known as the “G.I. Bill”, the Act provided support for education and technical training; loans for homes, farms, and business start-ups; employment transition and job counseling; construction of hospital facilities; and a strengthened Veterans Administration.² It created a transition to civilian life and the foundation for a vibrant economy and a rising middle class with special impact on Long Island. A similarly bold initiative is needed today, as the current “Montgomery G.I. Bill” is not designed for today’s demands; it is a recruitment incentive, not a reward for service.

The United States faces a “skills” gap and we are losing our lead in knowledge creation. Whereas after WWII we wanted to keep veterans from entering the workforce all at once, today we need skilled and educated workers. We have critical needs in science,

¹ http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/history.htm

² [Ibid.](#)

technology, engineering, and management; understanding foreign languages and cultures; healthcare; early childhood education and teaching. And, we have tens of thousands of returning veterans who need up-to-date education and training for careers without accumulating additional debt, sustained healthcare without the insurance required, and enhanced housing assistance to better meet the realities of today's housing costs. Today's veterans represent untapped potential. The original G.I. Bill provided opportunities for WWII veterans to gain training and access to housing and careers, and they became the "greatest generation" because of their many contributions to U.S. society.

I am pleased to say that our Adelphi University proposal for a new, "post 9-11" GI Bill has become the foundation for the "21st Century G.I. Bill" introduced this month by our Senator Clinton and Congressman Patrick Murphy of Pennsylvania, the only Iraq War veteran in Congress. The new G.I. Bill (S.1409/H.R.2385) borrows from the original by focusing on education for advanced skills, housing assistance for community stability, and investment in new business.

As a beneficiary of the Vietnam-Era G.I. Bill, and president of a University that welcomed hundreds of G.I.'s to its campus after World War II, I have seen first-hand how federal investments can generate enormous and profound returns. By renewing our commitment to the intent of the Servicemembers' Readjustment Act, we can invest in America's future, and express thanks to those who have served us well. Our economy, our schools, our healthcare system, our businesses, and our communities will benefit.

On this day to celebrate those who gave the ultimate sacrifice, let us reflect on their lives and be mindful of all those who have served and the debt we owe them for their service. Those we honor would want it no other way.