In-state tuition policies under the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act

State and federal policymakers have focused on making college accessible and affordable for U.S. veterans for years, but recent revisions to federal statute have shifted the policy landscape in a significant and meaningful way. Beginning in July 2015, states are required to offer in-state tuition prices to military veterans and their families as part of the enacted Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act (Choice Act).

Given the effectiveness date of July, the 2015 state legislative sessions are a crucial time for governors and lawmakers to determine state policy compliance with federal law.

This ECS Policy Analysis, released today, provides state and postsecondary leaders with a review of the Choice Act requirements, key information on deadlines, considerations for evaluating state policy for compliance and examples of policy actions.

"Providing access to in-state tuition prices for military veterans and their families is just the latest evolution of public policy that has long had the goal of supporting educational opportunity for these individuals," said Brian Sponsler, director of ECS' Postsecondary and Workforce Development Institute and report's co-author.

"It is critical that state policymakers are actively working to align their own policies with the forthcoming changes to federal law. Although many states have already instituted policy that provides in-state tuition rates to veterans and their families, we know that several states still need to take action before the July deadline."

Some important takeaways from this report include:
- By July 1, 2015, the Choice Act will require public postsecondary institutions to offer in-state tuition rates to qualified veterans and their dependents, regardless of state residency status.
- Effective July 1, 2015, the Department of Veterans Affairs will deny benefits payment requests for education courses under the Post-9/11 GI Bill and Montgomery GI Bill-Active Duty at public institutions that charge qualifying veterans and dependents tuition and fees in excess of in-state rates.
- States that do not ensure all public institutions offer in-state tuition rates will create a disincentive to enrollment and persistence for veteran students and their dependents.

Tweet this ECS report!
- What is being done to make college more accessible and affordable for U.S. veterans? @ECScomms bit.ly/1zN2fJ
- States must offer in-state tuition prices to military vets, per the enacted Choice Act. @ECScomms bit.ly/1zN2fJ
- A new @ECScomms report focuses in on what needs to be done to help veterans access and afford a college education. bit.ly/1zN2fJ
For questions, contact ECS Director of Communications Amy Skinner at askinner@ecs.org or (303) 299. 3609.

ECS was created by states, for states, in 1965. We track policy, translate research, provide unbiased advice and create opportunities for state policymakers to learn from one another.