

Policy Update

Defense Authorization Bill Signed into Law: Changes Enlistment Policies for Online Charter School Graduates

Overview:

On December 31, H.R. 1540 the National Defense Authorization Act for 2012 was signed into law by the President. The bill includes a provision that would provide parity for online public school graduates in military recruitment and enlistment policies. The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS), along with the International Association for K-12 Online Learning and K12, Inc., have been actively supporting this provision and worked to get it signed into law.

Background:

Current military recruiting policies classify candidates for military enrollment into three “tiers”:

- **Tier I "brick and mortar":** High school diploma graduate;
- **Tier II:** Alternative high school credentials including test-based equivalency diploma (GED), occupational program certificate of attendance, correspondence school diploma, home study diploma, or high school certificate of attendance; and
- **Tier III:** No secondary school credential.

Graduates of online public schools, operated either by charter schools or school districts, are currently considered Tier II candidates for the purposes of military enrollment—the equivalent of a GED—despite the fact that they fulfill all of the same graduation requirements established by their state of residence as their brick-and-mortar counterparts. This policy is a result of old attrition data being used to establish tiers; the Tier II category was established before online public schools even existed.

Online public schools follow federal and state guidelines, adhere to accountability standards, including attendance and instructional requirements, and use certified teachers that oversee instruction. Graduating with a degree from an online public school is equivalent to graduating with a degree from a brick-and-mortar public school and should be treated as such.

Recruiting Policy Updated:

The FY12 National Defense Authorization Bill creates a provision that provides parity for online public school graduates in military recruitment and enlistment policies. It also calls for the Secretary of Defense to prescribe a policy on recruitment and enlistment that incorporates data from each diploma source of its recruits in order to analyze attrition rates according to relevant diplomas in education today.

The passage through the Senate was seen as the last final hurdle before this provision becomes law. This bill passed the House of Representatives earlier this summer. NAPCS strongly supports the progress being made to ensure that military recruiting policy keeps up with the trends in learning styles and delivery methods of instruction.

For More Information:

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact Chad Miller, Senior Director of Federal Advocacy, cmiller@publiccharters.