



# NEWS RELEASE

## Arizona House of Representatives

1700 West Washington • Phoenix, Arizona • 85007-2844  
PHONE: (602) 926-5051

**Representative Sonny Borrelli (R- Lake Havasu City)**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **REPRESENTATIVE SONNY BORRELLI CALLS FOR JOINT LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE HEARING FOR VETERANS SHUT OUT OF FLIGHT SCHOOL**

**STATE CAPITOL, AZ (Thursday, June 4, 2015)** – State Representative Sonny Borrelli, Chairman of the House Committee on Military Affairs and Public Safety, is calling for a joint legislative hearing to address concerns about veterans being turned away from a flight school in Prescott, Arizona.

The Veterans Administration (VA) suspended funding in March for the flight school at Yavapai College, citing a regulation mandating that non-veterans account for at least 15 percent of students in any education program that receives GI Bill funding. Forty veterans from across the country were slated to start the program this summer, and many had relocated their families to Prescott before learning their program was suspended.

“It’s extremely concerning,” said Representative Borrelli, a 22-year veteran of the United States Marine Corps. “These are men and women who served their country honorably and earned the benefits promised by the GI Bill. Many of these veterans left their jobs and moved their families to participate in this flight training program, and they deserve answers as to why they’re suddenly getting turned away.”

For decades, the GI Bill has enabled veterans to go to school after their service, including flight schools. However, VA funding for flight schools has recently come under fire because of the expense and some perceived abuses in the aviation industry. Congressman Brad Wenstrup (R – Ohio) recently introduced H.R. 476, which would effectively terminate all helicopter and flight training programs for veterans by imposing a reimbursement cap of \$20,235.02 – far less than the actual cost of flight training.

“We need to be considering all of our options here,” said Borrelli. “We may want to look at some sort of monetary cap for pilot training programs funded by the VA, but this \$20,000 cap is unreasonable and will effectively deny thousands of veterans their chance at careers as professional pilots. I’m really struggling to understand why Congressman Wenstrup – a veteran himself – would push forward with this kind of legislation.”

Borrelli said that he is working with State Senator Steve Smith (R – Maricopa), chairman of the Senate Committee on Public Safety, Military and Technology, and hopes to hold a joint hearing of the two committees within the next couple of weeks.

“On the federal side, Senator McCain and Congressman Gosar have been fighting hard on this issue,” Borrelli said. “They have, and continue to be strong and passionate advocates for veterans, and we need to do whatever we can on the state level to support their efforts. A joint hearing will get these issues out in the open and give our veterans a chance to address how the VA’s policies and H.R. 476 affects them. Hopefully, we can work toward a solution together.”

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**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Stephanie Grisham  
Press Secretary  
Arizona House of Representatives  
Republican Majority Caucus  
sgrisham@azleg.gov  
602.926.5518 (office)  
480.707.7434 (cell)