



DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

ANNE LOPEZ
ATTORNEY GENERAL

News Release 2023-32

**ATTORNEY GENERAL LOPEZ JOINS BIPARTISAN CALL ON CONGRESS TO
PASS GI BILL RESTORATION ACT**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 1, 2023

HONOLULU, HI – Attorney General Anne Lopez joined a bipartisan, multistate call on Congress to support H.R. 1255, the *Sgt. Isaac Woodard, Jr. and Sgt. Joseph H. Maddox GI Bill Restoration Act of 2023*. The federal legislation, named in honor of two Black World War II veterans, extends eligibility for housing loans and educational assistance administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to Black World War II veterans, their surviving spouses, and certain direct descendants if the veteran was previously denied benefits on the basis of race.

In the letter, the 24 attorneys general asserted the legislation, through expanding access to homeownership and education, would help rectify past wrongs and fuel continued economic growth in communities across the country. “Our decision to uplift this legislation on this date is intentional,” the letter contends. “Today marks the 75th anniversary of President Truman’s signing of Executive Order 9981, on July 26, 1948, which mandated the desegregation of the U.S. military. This anniversary represents a powerful moment for us to honor and reaffirm our commitment to supporting and expanding economic opportunity for all of America’s veterans.”

“The Sgt. Isaac Woodard, Jr. and Sgt. Joseph H. Maddox GI Bill Restoration Act of 2023 recognizes the discrimination Black veterans often faced when they sought the same educational and housing benefits afforded to others,” says First Deputy Attorney General Matt Dvonch, who is currently serving as Acting Attorney General while Attorney General Lopez is out of state. “The bill is an important step toward addressing this historic injustice.”

Although the legislative text of the G.I. Bill was race-neutral, the administration of benefits was discriminatory, and Black World War II veterans were often denied

opportunities. Institutions adopted the Federal Housing Administration's racial exclusion programs, known as redlining, which excluded Black veterans from accessing the housing loan guaranty program. Black veterans were also denied access to educational benefits at certain universities on the basis of their race and were instead directed to vocational schools and chronically under-resourced historically Black colleges and universities.

Introduced by Congressmen Seth Moulton (MA-06) and James E. Clyburn (SC-06), *The Sgt. Isaac Woodard, Jr. and Sgt. Joseph H. Maddox GI Bill Restoration Act of 2023*, extends access to VA home loans and the Post-911 GI Bill education assistance benefits to Black World War II veterans, and to their surviving spouses and certain direct descendants, who were denied benefits in the original bill.

The *Sgt. Isaac Woodard, Jr. and Sgt. Joseph H. Maddox GI Bill Restoration Act of 2023* would:

- Extend access to the VA Loan Guaranty Program to the surviving spouse and certain direct descendants of Black World War II veterans who are alive at the time of the bill's enactment, if they can certify that the veteran was denied a specific benefit on the basis of race;
- Extend access to the Post-911 GI Bill educational assistance benefits to the surviving spouse and certain direct descendants of Black World War II veterans alive at the time of the bill's enactment, if they can certify that the veteran was denied a specific benefit on the basis of race;
- Require a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report outlining the number of individuals who received the educational and housing benefits as a result of this bill;
- Establish a Blue-Ribbon Panel of independent experts to study inequities in the distribution of benefits and assistance administered to female and minority members of the Armed Forces and provide recommendations to Congress and the President on additional assistance to repair those inequities.

The bill is named in honor of two Black World War II veterans. Sgt. Woodard was beaten and blinded in uniform by South Carolina police who dragged him from a bus in 1946. Sgt. Maddox was accepted by Harvard University, but denied financial assistance from his local Veterans Affairs office because the agency wanted to "avoid setting a precedent."

Today's letter was co-led by Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Joy Campbell, New Hampshire Attorney General John Formella, and Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul and joined by a bipartisan coalition of the attorneys general of Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin, in addition to Hawai'i.

A copy of the letter can be found [here](#).

* * *

Media Contact:

Dave Day
Special Assistant to the Attorney General
(808) 586-1284
Email: ATG.PIO@hawaii.gov
Web: <http://ag.hawaii.gov>