

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 6312

As Reported By House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to tuition exemptions for veterans.

Brief Description: Changing the tuition exemption for veterans of the Persian Gulf combat zone.

Sponsors: Senators Bauer, Oke, Kohl, Rasmussen, Sutherland, Snyder, Heavey, Goings and Sheldon.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 2/16/96, 2/20/96 [DPA].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Carlson, Chairman; Mulliken, Vice Chairman; Jacobsen, Ranking Minority Member; Mason, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Basich; Benton; Blanton; Delvin; Goldsmith; Mastin; Scheuerman and Sheahan.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7120).

Background: In 1991, during the conflict in the Persian Gulf, the Legislature enacted a law that permits public colleges and universities to waive tuition increases occurring after the 1990-91 academic year for certain veterans of the conflict. In order to qualify for a waiver, the veteran must have been a Washington resident at the time of the conflict, must have had an adjusted gross family income at or below Washington's median family income, and must have served in the Persian Gulf combat zone during 1991. The waiver was due to expire on June, 30, 1994.

In 1993, the Legislature amended the law to permit colleges to waive some or all of the tuition increases adopted after the 1990-91 academic year for Persian Gulf veterans. In 1994, the Legislature adopted an additional condition for receipt of a tuition waiver through this program. In order to qualify for a waiver, veterans must be enrolled for seven or more quarter credits per academic term. In addition, the authority to waive tuition increases was continued until 1997.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Legislature intends to honor veterans of the Persian Gulf combat zone for the public service the veterans have provided to their country. The Legislature intends that for these veterans institutions of higher education waive tuition and fee increases that have occurred since the 1990-91 academic year.

Public baccalaureate institutions and community colleges may waive all or a portion of tuition and fee increases adopted after the 1990-91 academic year for eligible veterans of the Persian Gulf combat zone. In order to qualify for the waiver, the veterans must have been state residents when they served on active duty in the armed forces of the United States in the Persian Gulf combat zone during 1991.

There are two waiver conditions that the veterans will no longer be required to meet. They will not be required to (1) be enrolled for seven or more credits per term; and (2) have an adjusted gross family income at or below the state's median family income.

The law will expire on June 30, 1999, instead of June 30, 1997.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: The eligibility criterion is removed that permits veterans who are resident students at the time they enroll in a state college or university to qualify for the waiver. The eligibility criterion in current law is retained that requires the veterans to have been state residents when they served in the Persian Gulf.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This legislation demonstrates support for the men and women who served their country in a war on foreign soil. It removes cumbersome requirements from current law and is supported by veteran groups around the state. The legislation intends to create the same waiver requirements for Persian Gulf veterans that now exist for Vietnam veterans.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Al Bauer, prime sponsor; John Lee, Deputy Director, Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (pro); and Stan Goldman (pro).