

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESSB 6585

As Passed House - Amended
March 3, 1994

Title: An act relating to tuition exemptions for veterans.

Brief Description: Extending tuition exemptions for Vietnam and Persian Gulf veterans.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Bauer, Oke and Roach).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Higher Education, February 25, 1994, DPA;
Appropriations, February 28, 1994, DPA(APP w/o HE)s.
Passed House - Amended, March 3, 1994, 98-0.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 16 members: Representatives Jacobsen, Chair; Quall, Vice Chair; Brumsickle, Ranking Minority Member; Sheahan, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Basich; Bray; Carlson; Casada; Finkbeiner; Flemming; Kessler; Ogden; Orr; Rayburn; Shin and Wood.

Staff: Susan Hosch (786-7120).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended by Committee on Appropriations and without amendment by Committee on Higher Education. Signed by 26 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Valle, Vice Chair; Silver, Ranking Minority Member; Carlson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appelwick; Ballasiotes; Basich; Cooke; Dellwo; Dorn; Dunshee; G. Fisher; Foreman; Jacobsen; Lemmon; Leonard; Linville; H. Myers; Peery; Rust; Sehlin; Sheahan; Stevens; Talcott; Wang and Wolfe.

Staff: Sherie Story (786-7142).

Background: The governing boards of the state's public higher education institutions may exempt veterans of the Vietnam conflict who served in Southeast Asia from the

payment of any increase in student tuition and fees. The veteran shall not be required to pay more than the total amount of tuition and fees paid by veterans of the Vietnam conflict on October 1, 1977. To qualify for the exemption, the veteran must have been on active service between August 5, 1964, and May 7, 1975. Additionally, the veteran must be a resident of Washington and must have enrolled in a state higher education institution on or before May 7, 1990. This exemption expires June 30, 1995.

Students who were enrolled in Washington State institutions of higher education on or after August 2, 1990, and whose academic work was interrupted by deployment in the Persian Gulf combat zone, are entitled to either a refund of tuition and fees for that academic term or shall be readmitted for one academic term without being subject to additional tuition or fees. The refund and re-enrollment benefits for Persian Gulf War veterans expires on June 30, 1995.

An additional tuition exemption exists which exempts Persian War veterans from tuition increases after August 1, 1990, if the veteran could have qualified as a Washington resident on August 1, 1990, and if the veteran can demonstrate financial need. The sunset date for this exemption is June 30, 1994.

Summary of Bill: Until June 30, 1997, college and university governing boards may continue to exempt Vietnam and Persian Gulf veterans from tuition increases if the veterans meet certain conditions. If a governing board does grant an exemption from tuition increases, the board may waive all or a portion of tuition increases that occur after October 1, 1997, for Vietnam veterans and after August 1, 1990, for Persian Gulf veterans.

Beginning with the fall academic term of 1994, in order to qualify for the exemption, Vietnam veterans must meet additional requirements. First they must remain continuously enrolled for seven or more quarter credits per academic term, except summer term, and not including community service courses. Next, they must have an adjusted gross family income that does not exceed Washington state's median family income. Finally, they must have exhausted all entitlement to federal educational benefits conferred as a result of their military service.

Persian Gulf veterans must be enrolled for seven or more quarter credits per academic term, except summer term, and not including community service courses. In addition, the re-enrollment option for Persian Gulf veterans is extended to June 30, 1997.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: (Higher Education) Benefits paid to veterans under the Montgomery GI Bill are not adequate to cover current educational costs. In addition, soldiers are required to contribute part of their pay towards the benefits. Many soldiers do not participate in the program because they cannot afford the required monthly contributions. The state tuition exemptions are needed by those state residents who gallantly served their country in war.

(Appropriations) None.

Testimony Against: (Higher Education) None.

(Appropriations) None.

Witnesses: (Higher Education) Chuck Lawrence, Veterans Legislative Coalition (pro); Joe Johnston, Paralyzed Veterans of America (pro); and Stevan M. Dilworth, Student (pro).

(Appropriations) None.