

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESSB 6585

As Reported By House Committee On:
Higher Education

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.

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).

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 Amended Bill: The tuition and fees exemption for Vietnam veterans and Persian Gulf veterans is extended to June 30, 1997. The re-enrollment option for Persian Gulf veterans is also extended to June 30, 1997. In addition, if an institutional governing board decides to grant the exemption, the board may waive all or a portion of the tuition increases that occur after October 1, 1977, for Vietnam veterans and August 2, 1990, for Persian Gulf veterans.

Amended Bill Compared to Engrossed Substitute Bill: If an institutional governing board decides to grant an exemption from tuition increases to a veteran of the Vietnam conflict or the Persian Gulf combat zone, the board may waive all or a portion of the tuition increases that occur after October 1, 1977, for Vietnam veterans and August 2, 1990, for Persian Gulf veterans.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: 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.

Testimony Against: None.

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