

HB 1047

BILL ANALYSIS

BACKGROUND

The governing boards of the public baccalaureate institutions and the community colleges may waive all or a portion of tuition and services and activities fees for some people who enroll in classes on a space available basis. Until 1996, these space available waivers were limited to permanent full-time institutional employees, senior citizens, and certain permanent full-time classified state employees. In addition, community colleges could waive tuition for eligible unemployed and underemployed persons. Students receiving these waivers do not count in official enrollment reports, and the institutions do not receive any state funding for them. Institutions were required to charge a fee of five dollars or more to cover the costs associated with enrolling these students.

In the 1996 legislative session, the legislature enacted two bills that expanded the types of persons eligible to receive space available waivers.

The law that permitted institutions to waive tuition and fees for permanent full-time classified state employees was revised to include a number of additional state employees. These included permanent employees who are employed half-time or more: (1) in classified service under state civil service law; (2) through the Public Employees' Collective Bargaining Act; and (3) in technical colleges as classified employees and exempt paraprofessionals. Nonacademic employees and members of the faculties or instructional staffs employed half-time or more at public colleges and universities were also included. People enrolled under this law must pay a registration fee of five dollars or more.

The second bill amended a different statute. The law that permitted baccalaureate institutions and community colleges to waive tuition and fees for the institutions' own permanent full-time employees was amended to include members of the Washington National Guard. People enrolled under this law are required to pay a registration fee that fully covers the costs of enrollment.

During the summer of 1996, the Attorney General's office advised the institutions that these two statutes conflict. The office advised the colleges that, if they wished to grant space available waivers to their own employees, the waivers must be limited to permanent full-time employees. If the colleges choose to grant waivers to other eligible state employees, the waivers could be granted to people employed half-time or more.

SUMMARY

The governing boards of each public baccalaureate institution and community college may waive all or a portion of tuition and fees for the institution's own employees who are enrolled in a class on a space available basis if those employees are employed on a half-time or more basis.