

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2891

As Reported By House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to resident tuition for active duty military personnel.

Brief Description: Treating active duty military personnel as residents for purposes of higher education tuition.

Sponsors: Representatives Lantz, Talcott, Gombosky, Woods, Bush, Edwards, Wood, Rockefeller, Conway and Haigh.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 2/4/00 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Active duty military stationed in Washington pay resident tuition at the public institutions of higher education.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Carlson, Republican Co-Chair; Kenney, Democratic Co-Chair; Lantz, Democratic Vice Chair; Dunn; Edmonds; Esser and Gombosky.

Staff: Erika Prager (786-7120).

Background: The level of tuition required for active duty military personnel, their spouses, and their dependents has been debated in the Legislature a number of times. In 1971, the statutes defining resident and nonresident students were consolidated; the nonresident differential was waived for active duty military and other groups. In the early 1980s, the tuition waiver programs were reviewed to determine whether or not to continue those not based on financial need. In 1982, the waiver of the nonresident fee differential was repealed for military as a means of generating additional general fund revenue. Projected revenue did not materialize, and in 1984, the waiver was reenacted.

Upon the recommendation of the Higher Education Coordinating Board, the 1992 Legislature made all tuition waiver programs permissive and variable. The community college system decided to grant partial waivers to all students in all waiver categories. Each of the four-year institutions developed its own methodology for granting the variable and permissive waivers.

In 1993, the Legislature included in the definition of "resident student" the spouses and dependents of active duty military personnel stationed in Washington--thus allowing them to pay tuition and fees at the resident student level. At the same time, active duty military personnel remained in the nonresident category and remained eligible for the permissive and variable waiver of the nonresident tuition differential.

Summary of Bill:

Active duty military personnel stationed in Washington are included in the definition of "resident student" and pay tuition and fees at the resident student tuition rate.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed except section 2 of this act takes effect June 30, 2002.

Testimony For: Military members live, work, and pay taxes in the state. Approximately 50 percent of discharged military stay in Washington. This is an investment in the state. Military members need further education to maintain their edge and contribute toward a better military force. The military is trying hard to retain good soldiers; and this would be an incentive. The military shares interest in the issue of access raised in the Higher Education Coordinating Board's master plan. More military will have access to higher education opportunities by allowing them to attend college at resident tuition rates. Many young members of the military and their families live off salaries that qualify them for food stamps. Any reduction in tuition helps to offset other expenses associated with attending college, such as books and supplies. The current policy is unfair. The state already treats the spouses and dependents of the military as residents. The soldiers themselves should get the same privileges. Colleges may have to forfeit some local revenue, but it is the right thing to do. In fact, 44 other states already allow in-state tuition for active duty military. The institutions can make it work. This policy is also simple to administer for the colleges.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Pat Lantz, prime sponsor; Melanie Reeder, Jake McFerren, Jan Vance, I Corps and Fort Lewis; Edward Vach, Ricky D. Strickland, and Wilson Sydenstricker, Bremerton Naval Station; Carol Seger, Washington Army National Guard; Karl Jonietz, Olympic College; George Durnie, Eastern Washington University; and Dennis Primoli, Veterans Legislative Coalition.