

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2233

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education, February 24, 2006

Title: An act relating to prioritizing tuition waivers for war veterans.

Brief Description: Mandating that a percentage of tuition waivers go to veterans.

Sponsors: House Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Kristiansen, B. Sullivan, Cox, Sells, Woods, Rodne, Bailey, Pearson, Strow, Campbell, Serben, O'Brien, Ahern, Kretz and Murray).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/07/06, 98-0.

Committee Activity: Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 2/23/06, 2/24/06 [DPA, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING, K-12 & HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Weinstein, Vice Chair, Early Learning & K-12; Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member; Benton, Berkey, Carrell, Delvin, Eide, Kohl-Welles, Pflug, Rasmussen, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Shin.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Pridemore, Vice Chair, Higher Education.

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: Within certain limits, institutions of higher education may waive all or a portion of tuition and fees for an eligible veteran or National Guard member, defined as a person who:

- has a domicile in Washington;
- was an active or reserve member of the United States military or naval forces or a National Guard member called to active duty;
- served in active federal service;
- served in a war or conflict fought on foreign soil or in another location in support of those serving on foreign soil or in international waters; and
- if discharged, received an honorable discharge.

Tuition waivers are also allowed for:

- a child and the spouse of an eligible veteran or National Guard member who became totally disabled while engaged in active federal military or naval service, or who is determined by the federal government to be a prisoner of war or missing in action; and
- a child and the surviving spouse of an eligible veteran or National Guard member who lost his or her life while engaged in active federal military or naval service. Upon remarriage, the surviving spouse is no longer eligible for a waiver.

These are considered state-supported waivers so it is assumed that monies in the institutions' budgets will offset the tuition not collected from students as a result of granting the waivers. The authority to grant state-supported waivers is capped for each institution at a certain percentage of the total tuition revenue the institution collects. Within their respective percentage caps, each institution decides how to apportion its waiver authority among the various categories of state-supported permissive waivers.

The institutions may also offer waivers to a military or naval veteran who resides in Washington but who did not serve on foreign soil or in international waters or in another location in support of those serving on foreign soil or in international waters, but no state funding support is provided for these waivers.

Summary of Amended Bill: The institutions of higher education must engage in outreach activities to increase the number of veterans who receive tuition waivers. Institutions of higher education must revise the applications for admission to provide applicants with the opportunity to indicate whether they are veterans who need assistance.

Each institution of higher education must ask veterans whether they have any federal GI Bill funds available to them. The institutions must encourage veterans to access the funds available under the federal GI Bill prior to providing a tuition waiver.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: Intent language that is no longer applicable to the current version of the bill is removed. Intent language is moved from the codified section of the bill to the intent section of the bill. A statutory reference in the statute is moved to the numerically correct position. The word "uniform" describing the admissions application is removed. Each institution of higher education must ask veterans whether they have any federal GI Bill funds available to them. The institutions must encourage veterans to access the funds available under the federal GI Bill prior to providing a tuition waiver.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 20, 2006.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: Less than one-half of one percent of the current tuition waivers go to veterans.

I am four years behind my peers in getting a higher education, which puts me at a disadvantage. Going back to school is a huge ordeal. It costs a lot of money and a lot of effort. We need help to get ahead. We will have record numbers of veterans returning home based on what is going on around the world. Please, make their dreams come true.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Representative Kristiansen, prime sponsor, Ernie Butler, Northwest Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America; Travis Hall, veteran; Skip Dreps, Northwest Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America.