

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5369

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, February 8, 2007

Title: An act relating to creating a scholarship for students entering mathematics and science professions.

Brief Description: Creating the qualified professions conditional scholarship.

Sponsors: Senators Shin, Berkey and Kilmer.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/8/07 [DPS-WM].
Ways & Means: 2/22/07.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5369 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Shin, Chair; Kilmer, Vice Chair; Delvin, Ranking Minority Member; Berkey, Schoesler and Sheldon.

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Tim Yowell (786-7435)

Background: The Washington Scholars program recognizes the accomplishments of three high school students from each of the 49 state legislative districts. High school principals nominate the top 1 percent of the graduating class on the basis of academic achievement, leadership, and community service. A committee, composed of high school principals and college admissions staff, makes the final selection. Students can use the grants at any public or independent college or university in Washington.

The Washington Award for Vocational Excellence honors three vocational students from each of the 49 state legislative districts for outstanding achievement in vocational/technical education. High schools, skills centers, and community and technical colleges nominate students based on occupational proficiency, leadership, community activities, work experience, and other qualities. A committee, representing business, labor, education, the Legislature, and citizens, makes the final selection. Students can use the grants at public

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two-year and four-year colleges and universities and accredited private colleges, universities, and vocational schools in Washington.

The Robert C. Byrd Scholarship is an invitation-only scholarship for high school seniors who demonstrate outstanding academic achievement and show promise of continued academic excellence. In addition, many community organizations, foundations, corporations, clubs, and civic groups offer scholarships to students. Scholarships are usually small and are awarded on the basis of academic achievement, leadership potential, artistic talents, athletic ability, career plans or field of study, or special hobbies or interests.

Summary of Bill: The qualified conditional scholarship program is created. Resident students may be eligible if they are registered for at least six credit hours, have at least a 3.0 grade point average at an institution of higher education, and have declared a major in mathematics, engineering, a physical science, or a natural science. The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) publicizes and administers the program. The HECB may solicit grants and donations from public or private sources. The HECB forms a selection committee to help it select participants based on superior scholastic achievement, leadership ability, and community contributions.

The amount of the conditional scholarship must not exceed the tuition and fees at the institution the student is attending or the resident tuition and fees at the University of Washington, whichever is lower. The maximum award is five years. Participants must repay the conditional scholarship, with interest, unless they are employed in a qualified profession. The duty to repay is forgiven on a year for year basis; one year of repayment is forgiven for each year employed in a qualified profession. The HECB is responsible for obtaining repayments and depositing the repayments in the qualified professions conditional scholarship account. The qualified professions conditional scholarship account is in the custody of the State Treasurer.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY RECOMMENDED SUBSTITUTE AS PASSED COMMITTEE (Higher Education): The criteria for selecting students takes into account the diverse nature of the disciplines eligible for the scholarship and allocates funds to represent a cross-section of the fields.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 10, 2007.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Higher Education): PRO: It is time to produce more graduates in mathematics and science. This is a conditional loan with forgiveness if the graduates work in Washington. The bill works because it helps students access higher education and provides a financial incentive to remain in Washington. The HECB will work with the business community to identify qualified professions.

Persons Testifying (Higher Education): PRO: Senator Shin, prime sponsor; John Clacik, HECB; Nancy Atwood, American Electronics Association.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: Washington business is acutely aware of the need for more math and science graduates, and strongly supports efforts such as this to increase their number.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Amber Carter, Association of Washington Business.