
Higher Education Committee

HB 1863

Brief Description: Increasing assistance for student veterans at institutions of higher education.

Sponsors: Representatives Seaquist, Sells, Maxwell, Finn and Ormsby.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs Western Washington University to coordinate a program to utilize the leadership of veterans to increase the success of veterans in higher education in partnership with Olympic College, Everett Community College, Skagit Valley College, Whatcom Community College, Bellingham Technical College, and Northwest Indian College.
- Allocates funds to support the program.

Hearing Date: 2/14/11

Staff: Madeleine Thompson (786-7304).

Background:

According to the American Council on Education, in 2007-2008 military undergraduates represented 4 percent of all undergraduates enrolled in postsecondary education in the United States and three quarters of these military students were veterans.

According to the Higher Education Coordinating Board, veteran enrollments in college have increased since the beginning of the recession in 2008. In 2009, Washington veterans received \$119.5 million from the U.S. Veterans Administration (VA) for education and vocational rehabilitation training, a 25 percent increase over the previous year. The five Washington counties whose veterans together received the largest amount of education and vocational rehabilitation training funds were: Pierce (\$24.7 million), King (\$21.8 million), Spokane (\$11.2 million), Snohomish (\$10.5 million), and Thurston (\$8.5 million).

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Post 9/11 GI Bill provides that veterans or schools they attend will receive a percentage, as determined by length of active duty service, of the following: (1) an amount of tuition and fees charged, not to exceed the most expensive in-state public institution of higher education. If the tuition and fees at the school attended are higher than the most expensive in-state tuition, the school may choose to participate in the Yellow Ribbon program; (2) a monthly housing allowance equal to the basic allowance for housing amount payable to E-5 with dependents, in the same zip code as the school. Effective October 1, 2011, those enrolled solely in distance learning will receive a housing allowance equal to one-half the national average; (3) a yearly books and supplies stipend of up to \$1000; and (4) a one time payment of \$500 payable to certain individuals relocating from highly rural areas.

In addition, veterans and National Guard members, or their immediate survivors, domiciled in Washington may be eligible for full or partial waivers of tuition and fees at public institutions.

Summary of Bill:

Western Washington University (WWU) coordinates and partners with Olympic College, Everett Community College, Skagit Valley College, Whatcom Community College, Bellingham Technical College, Northwest Indian College to provide a program that leverages the leadership of returning veterans. The WWU is assigned a variety of duties related to identifying resources, developing policies, training faculty and staff, and providing leadership opportunities. The other participating institutions should endeavor to create a full-time veterans staff position, provide forums for veterans to connect with other similar students, promote programs that help in the transition to civilian life, and provide targeted planning and counseling services.

Western Washington is to allocate funds to partner institutions based on the number of veterans they serve. The WWU is to report to the Legislature by November 1 on even numbered years on measures of veterans' success in higher education.

Funding allocations to support the program are \$872,000 in 2012 and \$1,097,500 in 2013.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 2/8/2011.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.