

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2503

As Passed House:
February 11, 2012

Title: An act relating to early registration at institutions of higher education for eligible veterans and national guard members.

Brief Description: Requiring institutions of higher education that offer an early course registration period to provide early registration for eligible veterans and national guard members.

Sponsors: House Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Hansen, McCoy, Moscoso, Appleton, Kelley, Springer, Green, Van De Wege, Finn, Hudgins and Maxwell).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 1/23/12, 1/26/12, 1/30/12 [DPS];
Education Appropriations & Oversight: 2/2/12 [DPS(HE)].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/11/12, 95-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires certain institutions of higher education to offer early registration to students who are eligible veterans or National Guard members.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 15 members: Representatives Seaquist, Chair; Carlyle, Vice Chair; Haler, Ranking Minority Member; Parker, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Asay, Buys, Crouse, Fagan, Hasegawa, Pollet, Sells, Springer, Warnick, Wylie and Zeiger.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Reykdal.

Staff: Madeleine Thompson (786-7304).

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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS & OVERSIGHT

Majority Report: The substitute bill by Committee on Higher Education be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 16 members: Representatives Haigh, Chair; Probst, Vice Chair; Anderson, Ranking Minority Member; Dammeier, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Fagan, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dahlquist, Hansen, Hargrove, Hope, Maxwell, Orwall, Pollet, Santos, Seaquist, Sells and Short.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Nealey and Reykdal.

Staff: Trista Zugel (786-7157).

Background:

According to the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs, one in nine Washington residents is a veteran.

Institutions of higher education provide a variety of benefits for veterans and their families pursuing higher education. State law permits that within state-supported waiver authority, institutions of higher education may waive all or a portion of tuition and fees for:

- an eligible veteran or National Guard member;
- the child or spouse of an eligible veteran or National Guard member who was totally disabled in the line of duty, or who is listed as missing in action or a prisoner of war; or
- the surviving child or spouse of an eligible veteran or National Guard member killed in the line of duty. Upon remarriage however, the surviving spouse no longer is eligible for a waiver.

Institutions of higher education also may waive all or a portion of tuition and fees for a military or naval veteran who did not serve in active federal service abroad or in support of those serving abroad, and who does not qualify as an eligible veteran or National Guard member.

In addition to tuition waivers, higher education institutions provide other benefits to veterans pursuing higher education. One example is the Vet Corps Navigator program funded by the federal program, AmeriCorps. The purpose of Vet Corps Navigators is to help veterans achieve their higher education goals. Vet Corps Navigators provide connections with federal, state, or local veterans benefits and financial aid programs, and help them adjust to college life. There are Vet Corps Navigators stationed at 17 community and technical colleges, five public baccalaureate institutions, and Pacific Lutheran University.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Beginning in the academic year 2012-13, institutions of higher education that offer an early course registration period for any segment of the student population are required to have a process in place to offer students who are eligible veterans or National Guard members early registration as follows:

- New students who are eligible veterans or National Guard members and who have completed all of their admission processes must be offered an early course registration period.
- Continuing students who are eligible veterans or National Guard members who have met current enrollment requirements must be offered early course registration among students with the same level of class standing or credit as determined by the attending institution and according to institutional policies.

In order to be eligible, veterans or National Guard members must be a Washington domiciliary who was an active or reserve member of the United States military or naval forces, or a National Guard member called to active duty, who served in active federal service under either Title 10 or Title 32 of the United States Code, in a war or conflict fought on foreign soil or in international waters, or in another location in support of those serving on foreign soil or in international waters, and if discharged from service, has received an honorable discharge.

The provisions expire on August 1, 2021.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Higher Education):

(In support) The proposed substitute bill addressed our concerns. Veterans are already prioritized at community and technical colleges. Giving students some lead time to secure their classes and send information to the Department of Veterans Affairs works well with the number of requirements. For continuing students in the community college sector, the students with enough credit get some lead time to register.

(In support with concerns) Prioritizing one group over the other has broader policy implications.

(Opposed) None.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Education Appropriations & Oversight):

(In support) It needed to be clear that if this requirement was imposed that the academic progress of other students was not interrupted. This bill was modified so that it only impacts schools that already have an early registration system. The four-year sector had a concern that the time to degree would increase if underclassmen were allowed to register before juniors and seniors. Important changes were made in the policy committee. There is only a slight edge given to veterans. There are significant processes in place to help deal with registration and matriculation of all students.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying (Higher Education): (In support) Representative Angel, prime sponsor; Ted Wicorek, Veterans Legislative Coalition; Paul Francis, Council of Presidents; Scott Copeland, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Sherry Burkey, Western Washington University; and David Mitchell, Olympic College.

(In support with concerns) Michele Johnson, Pierce College.

Persons Testifying (Education Appropriations & Oversight): Paul Francis, Council of Presidents; and Scott Copeland, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Higher Education): None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Education Appropriations & Oversight): None.