
Higher Education Committee

SB 5620

Brief Description: Authorizing waivers of building fees and services and activities fees for certain military service members.

Sponsors: Senators Bailey, Kohl-Welles, Frockt, Schoesler and Conway; by request of State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows the public institutions of higher education to waive building fees and services and activity fees for those military service members eligible to participate in the United States Department of Defense Tuition Assistance Program.

Hearing Date: 3/24/15

Staff: Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

Background:

United States Department of Defense Tuition Assistance Program.

The United States Department of Defense Tuition Assistance Program offers up to 100 percent tuition assistance for those members of the United States Armed Forces who wish to take college courses during their off-duty hours. Members of the Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force on active duty status may receive tuition assistance depending on their service branch's eligibility and application requirements. The National Guard, Coast Guard, and Army Reserve members on federal active duty status are also eligible. There may be additional tuition assistance eligibility requirements depending on the branch, such as a time-in-service requirement.

Tuition assistance can be used for qualifying courses and degree programs from two-year and four-year institutions. The standard tuition assistance is 100 percent, not to exceed \$250 per semester credit hour or \$166 per quarter credit hour, up to a total of \$4,000 per fiscal year. An eligible United States Armed Forces member may receive tuition assistance up to a combined

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total of 130 semester hours for undergraduate credit and 39 semester hours of graduate credit. The tuition assistance is paid directly to the institution.

In 2014 the federal government changed the program so tuition assistance only covers tuition. Fees not directly related to course instruction including, but not limited to costs associated with room, board, distance learning, equipment, supplies, books and materials, exams, insurance, parking, transportation, admissions, registration, or fines are not covered. In addition, service members must also maintain certain grades and cumulative grade point averages (GPA). Those taking undergraduate courses must pass their classes with a grade of a C or higher and maintain a cumulative GPA of at least a 2.0. Those taking graduate level courses must pass their classes with a B or higher and maintain a cumulative GPA of at least a 3.0. Those who do not achieve the minimum course grade will have to reimburse the military for the cost of the class, and those who do not maintain the cumulative GPA will lose their tuition assistance.

Summary of Bill:

The governing boards of the public institutions of higher education may waive all or a portion of building fees and service and activity fees for military service members eligible to participate in the United State Department of Defense Tuition Assistance Program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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