

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5620

As Passed Senate, March 6, 2015

Title: An act relating to authorizing waivers of building fees and services and activities fees for certain military service members.

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 History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/05/15, 2/10/15 [DP].

Passed Senate: 3/06/15, 49-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Bailey, Chair; Baumgartner, Vice Chair; Kohl-Welles, Ranking Minority Member; Becker, Frockt, Lias and Miloscia.

Staff: Evan Klein (786-7483)

Background: United States Department of Defense Tuition Assistance Program. Military Tuition Assistance is a benefit paid to eligible members of the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, and Coast Guard. Each service has the ability to pay up to 100 percent for the tuition expenses of its members. Military tuition assistance does not currently cover building fees or service and activity fees associated with attending an institution of higher education.

Washington Military Tuition Waiver. Subject to the limitations on the total amount of operating fees that each Washington institution of higher education may waive, the institutions of higher education may waive all or a portion of tuition and fees for an eligible veteran or National Guard member.

The institutions of higher education must waive all tuition and fees for the following:

- a child and spouse or domestic partner, or surviving spouse or domestic partner, of an eligible veteran or National Guard member who became totally disabled as a result of active service, or who is a prisoner of war; and

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- a child and the surviving spouse or domestic partner of an eligible veteran or National Guard member who lost their life as a result of serving in active duty.

Summary of Bill: Waivers of building fees and services and activities fees for certain military service members are authorized.

For military service members eligible to participate in the U.S. Department of Defense tuition assistance program, the governing boards of the community and technical colleges and the four-year institutions may waive all or a portion of the building fees and services and activities fees not covered by the program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: In May 2014, the U.S. Department of Defense changed its voluntary tuition assistance program. Building fees or services and activities fees are no longer covered. Community and technical colleges are concerned about the impact to active duty military service members. This bill picks up where tuition assistance leaves off. This bill, by allowing the waiver of building and activity fees, will eliminate cost barriers for veterans.

OTHER: Institutions don't currently have building and activity fee waivers. Students appreciate the fee waiver efforts, but want the fees that are waived to be supported by the state so that students don't pay for the fee exemptions.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Ted Wicorek, Veterans Legislative Coalition; Antonio Sanchez, Central WA University; Cody Eccles, Council of Presidents; Alison Grazzini, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

OTHER: Austin Wright-Pettibone, Associated Students of the University of Washington (UW); Alex Bolton, Graduate and Professional Student Senate, UW.