

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 1642

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to the Washington national guard postsecondary education grant program.

Brief Description: Concerning the Washington national guard postsecondary education grant program.

Sponsors: House Committee on College & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Representatives Leavitt, Hoff, Orwall, Klippert, Ryu, Paul, Berry, Dolan, Graham, Valdez, Chambers, Bronoske, Callan, Dufault, Jacobsen, Ramos, Rule, Simmons, Sullivan, Slatter, Bergquist, Ormsby and Young; by request of Military Department).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

College & Workforce Development: 1/17/22, 1/26/22 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/2/22, 96-0.

Passed Senate: 3/2/22, 48-0.

Passed Legislature.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Modifies eligibility requirements and the award amount for the Washington National Guard Postsecondary Education Grant program.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COLLEGE & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Slatter, Chair; Entenman, Vice Chair; Leavitt, Vice Chair; Chambers, Ranking Minority Member; Jacobsen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hansen, Kraft, Paul, Pollet, Sells and Sutherland.

Staff: Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

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

Background:

Washington National Guard Postsecondary Education Grant Program.

The Washington National Guard Postsecondary Education Grant program provides grants to actively participating members of the Washington National Guard to pursue an undergraduate degree or certificate. Participants commit to serving one year in the Washington National Guard in exchange for each year of grant funding they receive. Grant funding covers tuition and fees, minus any federal or state funded financial aid, plus \$500 for books and supplies. However, the annual grant received may not exceed the annual cost of tuition and services and activities fees at the University of Washington, plus the \$500 book allowance.

To be eligible, the student must:

- be an active drilling member in good standing with the Washington National Guard;
- have completed a financial aid application;
- not have previously earned a bachelor's degree or higher;
- attend an accredited higher education institution in Washington or a higher education institution in Washington that provides training under the Montgomery GI Bill;
- be a resident student; and
- agree to fulfill the service obligation.

The student may receive the grant for five years or 125 percent of the published length of the program. Any student that does not fulfill their service obligation will have the grant amount converted to a loan that is proportionate to the unsatisfied portion of the service obligation, plus interest and fees.

Washington College Grant.

The maximum Washington College Grant (WCG) award covers tuition and services and activities fees for 15 quarter credits or the equivalent at the state's public institutions of higher education. For example, the 2021-22 maximum award for students attending the University of Washington is \$11,339.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Eligibility for the Washington National Guard Postsecondary Education Grant program is modified to require that a student be enrolled in courses or a program leading to a postsecondary degree or certificate. The requirement that a student has not received a bachelor's degree or higher is eliminated.

In addition, the grant award amount is modified. The grant may not:

- exceed the maximum WCG award, plus \$500 for books and supplies;
- exceed the student's cost of attendance, when combined with all other public and private grants, scholarships, and waiver assistance the student receives; and
- result in a reduction of a participant's federal or other state financial aid.

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:

(In support) Washington National Guard members assist with wildfires, flooding, COVID-19 efforts like building emergency food boxes, and events like protecting the Martin Luther King Monument. These are regular citizens with day jobs and families. This program provides financial aid in exchange for service and is designed as a recruitment and retention tool at a time when the state desperately needs Washington National Guard members.

In the first academic year, the program had 175 applications during a year when guard members were too busy to even attend school. This year there were 165 awards. This proposal suggests some technical changes to ensure the money is allocated equitably. Currently, lowest income students are actually receiving the lowest award amounts due to the requirement that other grant aid be considered in the award calculation. These individuals are committing to the same service requirement, but for a much lower award, and costs for things like transportation, housing, and child care are going unmet. Another change allows guard members to pursue advanced degrees. This is an important step to support those who have supported the state.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Mari Leavitt, prime sponsor; Major General Bret Daugherty, Washington National Guard; Becky Thompson, Washington Student Achievement Council; Charles Barnett, National Guard Association of Washington; and Aaron Czyzewski, Food Lifeline, Washington Military Family Hunger Coalition.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.