

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 1318

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, March 21, 1995

Title: An act relating to the Washington scholars program.

Brief Description: Revising provisions for the Washington scholars program.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Carlson, Mulliken and Mastin; by request of Higher Education Coordinating Board).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 3/21/95 [DP-WM].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Bauer, Chair; Kohl, Vice Chair; McAuliffe, Prince, Sheldon, West and Wood.

Staff: Jean Six (786-7423)

Background: The Washington Scholars Program was created by the Legislature in 1981. The program has a number of purposes. First, the program annually honors three graduating high school seniors in each legislative district. Scholars who are selected have distinguished themselves through scholastic achievement, leadership ability and contributions to their communities. Second, the program is intended to raise public awareness of the contribution of these outstanding students through recognition ceremonies. The third purpose is to facilitate communication between high schools and colleges by providing scholars with information about college programs and available scholarships. The program was created originally to provide a state mechanism for using private funds for scholarships for outstanding high school seniors. In 1984, another purpose was added, and this is to provide tuition waivers for Washington scholars. The program is administered by the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB).

In 1984, the Legislature provided Washington scholars attending public colleges and universities with a mandatory waiver of tuition and services and activities fees for undergraduate studies. In order to receive the waiver, students must enter the public institution within three years of high school graduation. The law was amended in 1992 and again in 1993. Under current law, students who received the award before June 30, 1994, will continue to receive total waivers of tuition and fees. Institutions of higher education have the option of providing full, partial, or no waivers to students who receive the award after that date. Any waivers offered are subject to the overall waiver "cap" that limits the ability of institutions to waive more than a statutory percentage of total operating fees collected.

In 1988, the Legislature created a comparable scholarship program for Washington scholars who attend in-state independent colleges and universities. If funds are available, these scholars may receive a grant of up to the amount of tuition and services and activities fees at the research universities. The grant is contingent upon an equal matching grant by the independent institution. Funding for the scholarship has never been increased to keep pace with tuition and fee increases at the research universities. During the 1994-95 academic year, Washington scholars attending independent institutions receive about \$1,872, while scholars attending the University of Washington receive \$2,907.

Summary of Bill: With the exception of technical colleges, public colleges and universities are required to waive tuition and services and activities fees for Washington scholars selected before June 30, 1994. The waiver must be used for undergraduate studies. Students selected after that date do not receive a waiver.

Scholars selected after June 30, 1994, receive a grant, if funds are available. The amount of the grant cannot exceed tuition and fees at the public research universities. The grant must be used for undergraduate studies. The students may use the grant to attend either a public or independent college or university within the state. Independent institutions must continue to provide an equal matching grant to recipients attending their institutions. Scholars may transfer among in-state colleges and universities and continue to receive the grant.

The grants for Washington scholars is administered by the HECB. The bill is null and void if not funded in the 1995-97 budget act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 1995.

Testimony For: The policy behind this award expresses the intent of the Legislature "to establish a consistent and uniform program which will recognize and honor the accomplishments" of "students who have distinguished themselves through outstanding academic achievement." Now that all waivers are permissive and variable, it is necessary to establish a grant program encouraging students to attend in-state public or private higher education institutions.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Shirley Ort, HECB.