

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## HB 1601

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Higher Education, February 15, 1996

**Title:** An act relating to tuition and fee waivers.

**Brief Description:** Providing tuition and fee waivers for members of the Washington national guard.

**Sponsors:** Representatives D. Schmidt, Carlson, Mulliken, Jacobsen, Koster, Sheldon, Costa, Radcliff, Lambert, Robertson, Carrell, Backlund, Ballasiotes, Skinner, Huff, Johnson, Thompson, Elliot, Wolfe, Talcott, Conway, Kremen, Campbell, Benton, Mason, Cooke and Kessler.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Higher Education: 3/27/95, 3/30/95 [DP]; 2/15/96 [DP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Bauer, Chair; Kohl, Vice Chair; Hale, McAuliffe, Prince, Wood and Zarelli.

**Staff:** Jean Six (786-7423)

**Background:** National Guard Assistance Program. From 1979 to 1985, the National Guard Assistance Program operated in Washington. The program permitted enlisted members of the National Guard to receive grants of up to \$1,000 per year to cover reimbursable educational costs at accredited public or private colleges. The reimbursable costs included tuition, fees, books, institutional services, and laboratory supplies. Recipients were limited to 12 academic quarters or the equivalent. From 1979 to 1985, approximately \$200,000 per biennium was appropriated for the program.

Under the 1983 Sunset Act, the program was scheduled for termination on June 30, 1985. The Legislative Budget Committee (LBC) undertook a final program audit. The committee found that 27 states had tuition waivers or assistance for National Guard personnel. Two states provided education loans, eight states had selective scholarship programs, and six states provided educational assistance for dependents, usually under hardship conditions. Seven states did not have any program.

The final LBC program audit concluded that the effectiveness of the assistance program "cannot be readily demonstrated as required under the provisions of the Sunset Act," and that the continuation of the program was not warranted at that time. The LBC also commented that, "... if the Legislature decides to continue the program, it is additionally recommended that the program be targeted toward enhancing the manning of those National Guard units most likely to be utilized in the event of natural or man made disasters."

Legislation was introduced in 1985 to continue the assistance program. The legislation did not pass, and the program terminated on June 30, 1985.

Washington State National Guard Conditional Scholarship Program. In 1994, the Legislature created, but did not fund, the Washington State National Guard Conditional Scholarship program. Through the program, members of the National Guard below the rank of major may receive conditional scholarships to attend an institution of higher education in Washington. Participants must repay the scholarship, with interest, unless they serve in the National Guard for one additional year for each year of scholarship received. Funding for the scholarships may come from state or federal funds, private donations, or repayments from participants who do not meet their service obligation.

GI Bill Participation. Some members of the National Guard are eligible to participate in the Montgomery GI Bill Program. Eligibility criteria and educational benefits vary depending on the type and date of enlistment, and on the nature of the educational program.

Tuition Waivers. State supported institutions of higher education may waive a student's tuition and fees through about 35 different waiver programs. Four of the programs permit students to attend a class if space is available. The space available waivers are limited to institutional employees, senior citizens, classified state employees, and, at community colleges only, unemployed and underemployed persons. The institutions do not receive any state funds for students who are enrolled in these space available waiver programs.

**Summary of Bill:** With the exception of technical colleges, state colleges and universities are permitted to waive tuition and service and activities fees for members of the Washington National Guard enrolled on a space available basis. These students are not included in official enrollment reports, and the institutions do not receive any state funding for them.

Members of the National Guard and institutional employees who enroll on a space available basis are charged a fee that fully covers institutional administrative costs of enrolling the student.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Testimony For:** Many Guard members join and stay because they need educational opportunity. Washington needs to offer as many benefits as other states currently offer. The Guard is a state organization. Washington has lost about 30 percent of the members over the last ten years. Downsizing of the military has created significantly more responsibility and requirements for the members.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Representative Dave Schmidt, prime sponsor; Colonel Kevin Ryan, National Guard Assn. of WA; Tina Van Whalen, National Guard member and student; Sgt. Dante Elliott, National Guard.

