

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5162

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, February 2, 1995

Title: An act relating to tuition exemptions for veterans.

Brief Description: Changing the Vietnam veterans' tuition exemption.

Sponsors: Senators Bauer, Oke, Snyder, Hargrove, Haugen, Kohl, C. Anderson and Winsley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 1/26/95, 2/2/95 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5162 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

Staff: Jean Six (786-7423)

Background: The governing boards of the state's public higher education institutions may exempt veterans of the Vietnam conflict who served in Southeast Asia from any increase in student tuition and fees. The veteran shall not be required to pay more than the total amount of tuition and fees paid by veterans of the Vietnam conflict on October 1, 1977. To qualify for the exemption, the veteran must have served in Southeast Asia during the time period between August 5, 1964 and May 7, 1975. Additionally, the veteran must be a resident of Washington and must have enrolled in a state institution on or before May 7, 1990.

The 1994 Legislature extended the sunset date for this exemption to June 30, 1997. The 1994 Legislature also required that veterans receiving the exemption must: (1) be enrolled for seven or more quarter credits per academic term or their equivalent; (2) have an adjusted gross family income not exceeding the Washington State's median family income; and (3) have exhausted all entitlement for federal vocational or educational benefits conferred by virtue of their military service.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Public baccalaureate institutions and community colleges may exempt eligible Vietnam veterans from all or a portion of tuition and fee increases adopted after October 1, 1977. In order to receive the waiver, veterans must meet these conditions: (1) be a veteran who served on active duty in the military or naval forces of the United States anytime between August 5, 1964 to May 7, 1975; (2) have served in the Southeast Asia theater of operations; (3) have been enrolled in a public college or university before May 7, 1990; and (4) be a resident student at the time of enrollment.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: There are three waiver conditions the veteran no longer must meet: (1) remain continuously enrolled for at least seven credits per term, except summer session, and not including community service courses; (2) have exhausted all entitlement to federal educational benefits conferred because of military service; and (3) have an adjusted gross family income at or below the state's median family income.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 13, 1995.

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

Testimony For: Veterans are entitled to educational benefits. The requirements added by last year's legislation have caused a significant drop in veterans' enrollment. The affected veterans should be either reimbursed, grandfathered in, or given an extension of the program.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Beau Bergeron, Director, Veterans' Affairs; Roy Burns, Chuck Lawrence, and Randy Castro, Veterans' Legislative Coalition; Ed Madden, student, UW Tacoma.