

FINAL BILL REPORT

SSB 5112

C 255 L 05

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Providing public employment retirement credits for veterans of the Afghanistan conflict and the Persian Gulf War II.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education (originally sponsored by Senators Shin, Schmidt, Rockefeller, Rasmussen, Kline, Sheldon, Keiser, Doumit, Berkey, Kastama, Haugen, McAuliffe, Franklin, Johnson, Kohl-Welles, Benson and Oke).

Senate Committee on Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education

House Committee on Appropriations

Background: Individuals who meet the statutory definition of "veteran" are eligible for certain state benefits. One benefit is that if the individual is in the Public Employees' Retirement System Plan 1 (PERS 1) with at least 25 years of creditable service, he or she is eligible to receive credit for up to five years of qualifying military service. Qualifying military service is service within one of a number of specific periods of war as defined in statute.

An additional state benefit available to veterans is eligibility for tuition and fee waivers from the public baccalaureate institutions and community colleges. The state higher education institutions are granted the authority by the legislature to waive all or a portion of tuition and fees for veterans. All waiver programs are permissive for the institutions. Currently, there are three separate statutes that provide tuition waiver authority for veterans.

Veterans of the first Persian Gulf war may be exempted from any increase in student tuition or fees that occurred after the 1990-91 academic year. To qualify for the exemption the veteran must be a resident student and must have served in the Persian Gulf combat zone as designated by executive order of the President of the United States during 1991.

Veterans of the Vietnam conflict are eligible for a waiver of tuition increases that have occurred since October 1977. To qualify for the waiver the veteran must be a resident student and must have been on active federal service in the armed forces during the period August 5, 1964 through May 7, 1975.

Veterans enrolled in an institution on or before 1977, including veterans of both World Wars and the Korean conflict, are also eligible under statute for a full or partial tuition waiver if he or she is no longer eligible for federal education or vocational benefits.

Summary: Military service in southern or central Asia as part of Operation Enduring Freedom and service in the Persian Gulf as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom are added to the list of conflicts which qualify a member of PERS 1 for service credits. To qualify for service in these categories, a member of PERS 1 must be awarded the related campaign badge or medal.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	48	0	
House	89	0	(House amended)
Senate	46	0	(Senate concurred)

Effective: July 24, 2005