

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1283

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to high school diplomas for persons who leave school before graduation to serve in the United States armed forces.

Brief Description: Authorizing high school diplomas to be issued to persons who left high school before graduation to serve in the United States armed forces.

Sponsors: Representatives Roach, McDonald, Morrell, Rolfes, Kelley, Skinner, Orcutt, Priest, Takko, Conway, Appleton, Newhouse, Haler, Moeller, VanDeWege, McCune, Roberts and Springer.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/2/07 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Expands high school diploma eligibility for honorably discharged veterans who left high school before graduation to serve in the armed forces.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; Barlow, Vice Chair; Priest, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Haigh, McDermott, Roach, Santos and P. Sullivan.

Staff: Andrew Colvin (786-7304).

Background:

Legislation was enacted in 2002 that allows school districts to issue high school diplomas to World War II veterans who left high school before graduation to serve in the armed forces. In 2003 this was expanded to include veterans of the Korean conflict. School districts may issue a high school diploma to a person who:

- is an honorably discharged member of the armed forces of the United States;

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- was scheduled to graduate from high school from 1940 through 1955; and
- left high school before graduation to serve in World War II or the Korean conflict.

Eligible veterans who hold a high school equivalency certification may still receive a diploma, and diplomas may be issued posthumously.

To obtain a high school diploma, a veteran, or a person acting on behalf of a deceased veteran, must complete an application form and submit discharge papers that verify the veteran's military service and honorable discharge. Applications may be submitted to the high school the veteran would have graduated from, a high school in the veteran's local community, or a high school with which the veteran has substantial ties. High schools are not required to participate in the program.

Summary of Bill:

School districts may issue high school diplomas to all honorably discharged veterans who left high school before graduation to serve in the armed forces. The provisions are removed that restrict eligibility to veterans of World War II and the Korean Conflict who were scheduled to graduate from high school from 1940 through 1955.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill is important to the VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars). The bill will primarily affect the 250-300 Vietnam veterans who entered the service before graduation, and allow them the same opportunity as those who served in WWII and the Korean conflict. Because the military began requiring a high school diploma in 1985, it likely would not affect those who joined the military after that date. However, the bill is open-ended to allow for unforeseen future conflicts or events during which people might leave high school early to join the armed forces. Four years in the military is generally more educational than four years of high school. One veteran, who left high school early, took the test for his GED when he left the military and was in the ninety-second percentile. Most of the education he received to prepare for the test was in the military.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Roach, prime sponsor; Gary Hulsey, Veteran's Legislative Coalition.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.