

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1109

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, March 26, 2013

Title: An act relating to early registration at institutions of higher education for eligible veterans and national guard members.

Brief Description: Requiring institutions of higher education that offer an early course registration period to provide early registration for eligible veterans and national guard members.

Sponsors: Representatives Hansen, Haler, Magendanz, Shea, Klippert, Smith, Green, Ormsby, Morrell, Van De Wege, Ryu, Maxwell, Zeiger, Wilcox, Jinkins, Springer, Scott, Freeman, Bergquist, Hargrove and Parker.

Brief History: Passed House: 3/13/13, 98-0.

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 3/26/13 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Bailey, Chair; Becker, Vice Chair; Kohl-Welles, Ranking Member; Baumgartner, Frockt, McAuliffe and Tom.

Staff: Katherine Taylor (786-7434)

Background: Student Registration. At public institutions of higher education, student course registration order is usually based on the number of credits a student is awarded by the attending institution, sometimes referred to as class standing. Priority registration varies depending on each institutional policy, and some institutions do not offer priority registration.

Veterans in Higher Education. During the 2011 Fall academic quarter, public baccalaureate institutions in Washington served approximately 3500 veterans, and the community and technical colleges served nearly 18,000 veterans. Institutions of higher education provide a variety of benefits for veterans and their families pursuing higher education. State law permits that within state supported waiver authority, institutions of higher education may waive all or a portion of tuition and fees for:

- an eligible veteran or National Guard member;

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- the child or spouse of an eligible veteran or National Guard member who was 100 percent disabled in the line of duty, or who is listed as missing in action or a prisoner of war; or
- the surviving child or spouse of an eligible veteran or National Guard member killed in the line of duty; however, upon remarriage the surviving spouse no longer is eligible for a waiver.

In addition to tuition waivers, higher education institutions provide other benefits to veterans pursuing higher education. One example is the Vet Corps Navigator program funded by the federal program, AmeriCorps. The purpose of Vet Corps Navigators is to help veterans achieve their higher education goals. Vet Corps Navigators provide connections with federal, state, or local veterans' benefits and financial aid programs, and help veterans adjust to college life.

Summary of Bill: Beginning in the academic year 2013-14, institutions of higher education that offer an early course registration period for any segment of the student population must have a process in place to offer students who are eligible veterans or National Guard members early registration as such:

- new students who are eligible veterans or National Guard members and who have completed all of their admission processes must be offered an early course registration period; and
- Continuing students who are eligible veterans or National Guard members who meet current enrollment requirements must be offered early course registration among students with the same level of class standing or credit as determined by the attending institution and according to institutional policies.

In order to be eligible, a veteran or National Guard member must be a Washington domiciliary who was an active or reserve member of the United States military or naval forces, or a National Guard member called to active duty, who served in active federal service, in a war or conflict fought on foreign soil or in international waters, or in another location in support of those serving on foreign soil or in international waters, and who, if discharged from service, received an honorable discharge.

The provisions expire on August 1, 2022.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill is outstanding. We want to keep Veterans Affairs (VA) money in Washington. This is a great bill because vets can get the ball rolling. This bill will help with getting VA money earlier. This will help with large veteran populations at schools. Students must still meet prerequisites for courses. We are proud of the work our schools are doing with veterans. We are doing a lot to train and educate

veterans. The GI bill can be a laborious process. We support this bill. Veteran students do not get GI bill funds unless they are enrolled in classes.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Ted Wicorek, Veterans Legislative Coalition; Scott Copeland, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Jane Wall, The Council of Presidents; Tristan Hanon, Associated Students of WA State University.