

FINAL BILL REPORT

HB 1688

C 126 L 19
Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Concerning resident student status as applied to veterans.

Sponsors: Representatives Morgan, Sutherland, Leavitt, Gildon, Kilduff, Ryu and Doglio; by request of Department of Veterans Affairs.

House Committee on College & Workforce Development
House Committee on Appropriations
Senate Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development
Senate Committee on Ways & Means

Background:

The Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act.

The Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act (Choice Act) was enacted in 2014. Under the Choice Act, public institutions of higher education are required to provide in-state tuition to eligible veterans and dependents in order for the institution to remain eligible to receive payments under the Montgomery GI Bill, Post-9/11 GI Bill, and other veteran education benefits (veteran education benefits). In 2015 the Legislature updated the definition of resident student for in-state tuition purposes to align with federal law and maintain statewide eligibility. The updated statute allows a student to qualify as a resident student for in-state tuition purposes if he or she meets any of the following criteria:

- has separated from the uniformed services with any period of honorable service after at least 90 days of active duty service, is eligible for veteran education benefits, and enters an institution of higher education in Washington within three years of his or her date of separation from the uniformed services;
- is entitled to veteran education benefits based on his or her relationship as a spouse, former spouse, or child to an individual who has separated from the uniformed services with any period of honorable service after at least 90 days of active duty service, and who enters an institution of higher education in Washington within three years of the service member's date of separation from the uniformed services; or
- is entitled to the Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship based on his or her relationship with a deceased member of the uniformed services who completed at least 90 days of active duty service and died in the line of duty.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

In 2016 Congress added individuals using transferred Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits while the transferor is on active duty to the Choice Act. Again in 2018, Congress amended the Choice Act to require that all individuals using federal veterans vocational rehabilitation benefits under the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program be charged in-state tuition.

Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program.

The VR&E Program provides disabled veterans with vocational counseling and rehabilitation planning for employment purposes. This can include everything from skills assessment, resume development, case management services, on-the-job training, apprenticeships, and postsecondary education.

According to the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs, in fiscal year 2017 there were 23,400 individuals in Washington using federal veterans educational benefits.

Summary:

Students who are entitled to federal VR&E benefits are added to the list of students eligible for residency for in-state tuition purposes. In addition, references to federal veterans educational benefits are updated, and a reference to individuals covered under the Choice Act is added to the residency statute.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	97	0
Senate	43	0

Effective: July 28, 2019