

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1097

*As Reported By House Committee on:
Higher Education*

Title: An act relating to tuition and fee waivers.

Brief Description: Waiving tuition and fees for national guard members.

Sponsor(s): Representatives Orr, Wood, Jacobsen, Nealey, Anderson, Prince, Kremen, Day, Rasmussen, Sheldon, Scott, Prentice, Dellwo, R. King, Winsley, Ferguson, Wineberry, Broback, Edmondson, Paris, Jones, Wynne, Chandler, Miller and Tate.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Higher Education, February 27, 1991, DPS.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
HIGHER EDUCATION**

Majority Report: *That Substitute House Bill No. 1097 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.* Signed by 10 members: Representatives Jacobsen, Chair; Ogden, Vice Chair; Wood, Ranking Minority Member; Basich; Dellwo; Fraser; Ludwig; Miller; Prince; and Sheldon.

Minority Report: *Without recommendation.* Signed by 2 members: Representatives May, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; and Spanel.

Staff: Susan Hosch (786-7120).

Background: From 1979 to 1985, the National Guard Assistance Program operated in Washington. The program permitted enlisted members of the National Guard to receive grants of up to \$1,000 per year to cover reimbursable educational costs at accredited public or private colleges. The reimbursable costs included tuition, fees, books, institutional services, and laboratory supplies. Recipients were limited to 12 academic quarters or the equivalent. From 1979 to 1985, approximately \$200,000 per biennium was appropriated for the program.

Under the 1983 Sunset Act, the program was scheduled to be terminated on June 30, 1985. The Legislative Budget

Committee (LBC) undertook a final program audit. The committee found that 27 states had tuition waivers or assistance for National Guard personnel. Two states provided educational loans, eight states had selective scholarship programs, and six states provided educational assistance for dependents, usually under hardship conditions. Seven states did not have any program.

The final LBC program audit concluded that the effectiveness of the assistance program "cannot be readily demonstrated as required under the provisions of the Sunset Act," and that the continuation of the program was not warranted at that time. The LBC also commented that, "... if the Legislature decides to continue the program, it is additionally recommended that the program be targeted toward enhancing the manning of those National Guard units most likely to be utilized in the event of natural or man made disasters."

Legislation was introduced in 1985 to continue the assistance program. The legislation did not pass, and the program terminated on June 30, 1985.

Some members of the National Guard are eligible to participate in the Montgomery GI Bill Program. Eligibility criteria and educational benefits vary depending on the type and date of enlistment, and on the nature of the educational program. At the present time, members of the Active Guard Reserve are not eligible to participate in the GI Bill Program. According to information provided by the National Guard, about 300 members of the Washington National Guard have no educational benefits.

Summary of Substitute Bill: State colleges and universities are permitted to waive tuition and service and activities fees for members of the Washington National Guard enrolled on a space available basis. These students will not be included in official enrollment reports, and the institutions will not receive any state funding for them.

Members of the National Guard and institutional employees who enroll on a space available basis will be charged a fee that will fully cover institutional administrative costs of enrolling the student. Enrolling institutions will adopt guidelines to implement the waivers. No waivers will be granted to members of the National Guard after June 30, 1996.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Members of the National Guard and institutional employees enrolling on a space available basis will be charged a fee that fully covers administrative costs of enrolling the students.

Space available waivers for members of the National Guard expire on June 30, 1996.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Members of the National Guard serve the State in many ways. Currently, the Guard has a shortage of more than 900 personnel. Passage of this legislation will assist the Guard in its efforts to recruit and retain members. The Guard has a small officer's corps. Most of the members are enlisted personnel. Many of those members need an education to advance both in the Guard and in their professions. Washington is one of thirteen states that do not have a program of educational benefits for members of the National Guard.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Maureen Flak, National Guard Association; Gary Plendl, National Guard Association; Maria Sabala, National Guard Association; and Peter Lukevich, Member, National Guard.