

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2065

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to prioritizing tuition waivers for war veterans.

Brief Description: Prioritizing tuition waivers for war veterans.

Sponsors: Representatives Kristiansen, Sells, Jarrett, Wallace, B. Sullivan, Campbell, Strow, Hailey, Kretz, Anderson, Buri, McCune, Rodne, Linville, Pearson, Hurst, O'Brien, Newhouse, Roach, Bailey, Wood, Rolfes, Kelley and Ormsby.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 2/19/07, 2/26/07 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Removes provisions requiring institutions of higher education to ask about, and encourage the use of, funds available under the Montgomery GI Bill prior to providing state supported tuition waivers to eligible veterans.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Wallace, Chair; Sells, Vice Chair; Anderson, Ranking Minority Member; Buri, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hasegawa, Jarrett, McIntire and Roberts.

Staff: Andrew Colvin (786-7304).

Background:

Within certain limits, institutions may waive all or a portion of tuition and fees for eligible students. For these waivers, known as state-supported waivers, it is assumed that state moneys in the institutions' budgets will offset the tuition not collected from students as a result of granting the waivers. This authority to grant state-supported waivers is capped for each institution at a certain percentage of the total tuition revenue the institution collects.

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.

Within its respective percentage caps, each institution decides how to apportion its waiver authority among the various categories of state-supported permissive waivers.

State-supported waivers are available to military and naval veterans who meet certain eligibility requirements. Institutions of higher education may waive all or a portion of tuition and fees for a veteran or National Guard member who:

- was an active or reserve member of the United States military or naval forces, or a National Guard member called to active duty;
- served in active federal service, under either Title 10 or Title 32 of the United States Code, 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
- if discharged from service, has received an honorable discharge.

Institutions of higher education are required to ascertain through admission applications whether a student may be eligible for a waiver through the student's veteran status. If so, the institution must ask whether funds are available to the student through the Montgomery GI Bill, and shall encourage the student to utilize GI Bill funds prior to providing a tuition waiver.

Summary of Bill:

Provisions are repealed that require institutions of higher education, prior to providing a tuition waiver to an eligible veteran, to inquire about the availability of, and encourage the use of, funds available under the Montgomery GI Bill.

The Legislature intends to make tuition waivers to all eligible veterans admitted to the state's institutions of higher education.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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 is really just a technical fix to HB 2233 that passed in 2006. A veteran who receives funds under the GI Bill might have additional financial needs. Therefore, the GI Bill funds and the tuition waiver need to be available concurrently. This is an issue of fairness. Any help you can give a veteran that would help them move on to higher education is good. These waivers represent foregone revenue, and in 2003 the Legislature provided direction to reduce the use of these kinds of waivers (i.e. state supported waivers).

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Kristiansen, prime sponsor; Skip Dreps, Paralyzed Veterans of America; Joel Ware; Cindy Morana, Council of Presidents; and Mike Partridge, Veterans Legislative Committee.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.