

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2004

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**As Passed House:**

February 7, 2024

**Title:** An act relating to early registration at institutions of higher education for eligible veterans, national guard members, active duty military members, and their spouses, domestic partners, and dependents.

**Brief Description:** Providing early registration at institutions of higher education for military students.

**Sponsors:** Representatives McEntire, Leavitt, Couture, Slatter, Ryu, Senn, Graham, Callan, Sandlin and Shavers.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Postsecondary Education & Workforce: 1/10/24, 1/12/24 [DP].

**Floor Activity:**

Passed House: 2/7/24, 95-0.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requires institutions of higher education that provide early course registration to allow students who are eligible veterans, national guard members, active duty military members, and their spouses, domestic partners, and dependents early course registration.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION & WORKFORCE

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Slatter, Chair; Entenman, Vice Chair; Reed, Vice Chair; Ybarra, Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Jacobsen, Klicker, Leavitt, Nance, Pollet, Schmidt and Timmons.

**Staff:** Elizabeth Allison (786-7129).

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

**Background:**

Early course registration allows students to register for classes prior to the standard open registration date. At public institutions of higher education, student course registration order is usually based on the number of credits a student has been awarded by the attending institution, sometimes referred to as "class standing." Priority registration varies depending on each institution's policy, and some institutions do not offer priority registration.

In 2013 the Legislature passed House Bill 1109, which required institutions of higher education that offered early course registration to have a process in place to allow students who were eligible veterans or National Guard members early course registration. In 2015 the policy was expanded to include spouses receiving eligible veteran education benefits. The policy expired on August 1, 2022.

**Summary of Bill:**

Beginning in the 2024-25 academic year, public 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 allow students who are eligible veterans, National Guard members, active duty military, and their spouses, domestic partners, and dependents early course registration. Eligible students who are:

- new students who have completed all of their admission processes must be offered an early course registration period; and
- continuing and returning former students who have met current enrollment requirements must be offered early course registration among continuing students with the same level of class standing or credit as determined by the attending institutions and according to institutional policies.

An eligible veteran or National Guard member is defined as an individual residing in Washington 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, or in a war or conflict fought on foreign soil or in international waters or in support of those serving on foreign soil or in international waters, and if discharged from service, has received an honorable discharge or any other discharge if the sole reason for discharge is due to gender or sexuality.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) The original policy for this bill expired in August, 2022, and after it expired, it was recognized that the legislation had merit and did good work for men and women in the military. This policy should be continued because it is a benefit for those who have served and sacrificed for their country. This country has not always rolled out the red carpet for service members, but this has changed in recent years. Veterans and service members are being considered first, and legislatures are working at the state level and federally to make sure veterans are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve. Early registration would help accomplish this. Military orders can make a person leave right at the prime time for registering for classes. If the person leaves, they might not return in time to register. This bill addresses that and also helps veterans who return from active duty. After the original policy expired, the public four-year institutions have continued to offer this benefit for veterans, and the institutions support the reauthorization and expansion of the original policy. Early registration is essential for securing financial aid. Around 1,620 students at Washington State University would qualify for early registration under this bill. The expansion of the policy to include dependents is something students are very thankful for. This policy also supports disabled veterans as it allows them to register early and have extra time to request accommodations. Allowing military students to register early is the least the Legislature can do to alleviate some stress for military folks.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Joel McEntire, prime sponsor; Tammie Perreault, Department of Defense; Jordan Caron, University of Washington; Collin Bannister, The Washington Student Association and Associated Students of Washington State University; and Reese Ramirez, Associated Students of University of Washington Tacoma.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.