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**SENATE BILL 5954**

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**State of Washington**

**69th Legislature**

**2026 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Wagoner, Holy, and Nobles

Prefiled 12/29/25. Read first time 01/12/26. Referred to Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development.

1 AN ACT Relating to veteran survivor tuition waiver eligibility;  
2 and amending RCW 28B.15.621.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 **Sec. 1.** RCW 28B.15.621 and 2024 c 146 s 12 are each amended to  
5 read as follows:

6 (1) The legislature finds that active military and naval  
7 veterans, reserve military and naval veterans, and national guard  
8 members called to active duty have served their country and have  
9 risked their lives to defend the lives of all Americans and the  
10 freedoms that define and distinguish our nation. The legislature  
11 intends to honor active military and naval veterans, reserve military  
12 and naval veterans, and national guard members who have served on  
13 active military or naval duty for the public service they have  
14 provided to this country.

15 (2) Subject to the limitations in RCW 28B.15.910, the governing  
16 boards of the state universities, the regional universities, The  
17 Evergreen State College, and the community and technical colleges,  
18 may waive all or a portion of tuition and fees for an eligible  
19 veteran or national guard member.

20 (3) The governing boards of the state universities, the regional  
21 universities, The Evergreen State College, and the community and

1 technical colleges, may waive all or a portion of tuition and fees  
2 for a military or naval veteran who is a Washington domiciliary, but  
3 who did not serve on foreign soil or in international waters or in  
4 another location in support of those serving on foreign soil or in  
5 international waters and who does not qualify as an eligible veteran  
6 or national guard member under subsection (8) of this section.  
7 However, there shall be no state general fund support for waivers  
8 granted under this subsection.

9 (4) Subject to the conditions in subsection (5) of this section  
10 and the limitations in RCW 28B.15.910, the governing boards of the  
11 state universities, the regional universities, The Evergreen State  
12 College, and the community and technical colleges, shall waive all  
13 tuition and fees for the following persons:

14 (a) A child and the spouse or the domestic partner or surviving  
15 spouse or surviving domestic partner of an eligible veteran or  
16 national guard member who became totally disabled as a result of  
17 serving in active federal military or naval service, or who is  
18 determined by the federal government to be a prisoner of war or  
19 missing in action; and

20 (b) A child and the surviving spouse or surviving domestic  
21 partner of an eligible veteran or national guard member who lost his  
22 or her life as a result of serving in active federal military or  
23 naval service.

24 (5) The conditions in this subsection (5) apply to waivers under  
25 subsection (4) of this section.

26 (a) (i) A child must be a Washington domiciliary and:

27 (A) Be between the age of (~~seventeen~~) 17 and (~~twenty-six~~) 26  
28 to be eligible for the tuition waiver; or

29 (B) Meet one of the eligibility periods provided in 38 U.S.C.  
30 Sec. 3512, as it exists on the effective date of this section.

31 (ii) A child's marital status does not affect eligibility.

32 (b) (i) A surviving spouse or surviving domestic partner must be a  
33 Washington domiciliary.

34 (ii) (A) (A) Unless the surviving spouse or surviving domestic  
35 partner meets one of the eligibility periods provided in 38 U.S.C.  
36 Sec. 3512, as it exists on the effective date of this section, a  
37 surviving spouse or surviving domestic partner of the eligible  
38 veteran or national guard member has (~~ten~~) 10 years to receive  
39 benefits under the waiver from whichever date occurs last:

40 (I) The date of the death;

1 (II) The date of total disability;

2 (III) Federal determination of service-connected death or total  
3 disability; or

4 (IV) Federal determination of prisoner of war or missing in  
5 action status.

6 (B) Upon remarriage or registration in a subsequent domestic  
7 partnership, the surviving spouse or surviving domestic partner is  
8 ineligible for the waiver of all tuition and fees.

9 (c) Each recipient's continued participation is subject to the  
10 school's satisfactory progress policy.

11 (d) Tuition waivers for graduate students are not required for  
12 those who qualify under subsection (4) of this section but are  
13 encouraged.

14 (e) Recipients who receive a waiver under subsection (4) of this  
15 section may attend full-time or part-time. Total credits earned using  
16 the waiver may not exceed (~~two hundred fifty~~) 250 quarter credits,  
17 or the equivalent of semester credits.

18 (f) Subject to amounts appropriated, recipients who receive a  
19 waiver under subsection (4) of this section shall also receive a  
20 stipend for textbooks and course materials in the amount of (~~five  
21 hundred dollars~~) \$500 per academic year, to be divided equally among  
22 academic terms and prorated for part-time enrollment.

23 (6) Required waivers of all tuition and fees under subsection (4)  
24 of this section shall not affect permissive waivers of tuition and  
25 fees under subsection (3) of this section.

26 (7) Private vocational schools and private higher education  
27 institutions are encouraged to provide waivers consistent with the  
28 terms in subsections (2) through (5) of this section.

29 (8) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this  
30 section.

31 (a) "Child" means a biological child, adopted child, or  
32 stepchild.

33 (b) "Eligible veteran or national guard member" means a  
34 Washington domiciliary who was an active or reserve member of the  
35 United States military or naval forces, or a national guard member  
36 called to active duty, who served in active federal service, under  
37 either Title 10 or Title 32 of the United States Code, in a war or  
38 conflict fought on foreign soil or in international waters or in  
39 support of those serving on foreign soil or in international waters,

1 and if discharged from service, has a qualifying discharge as defined  
2 in RCW 73.04.005.

3 (c) "Totally disabled" means a person who has been determined to  
4 be (~~one hundred~~) 100 percent disabled by the federal department of  
5 veterans affairs.

6 (d) "Washington domiciliary" means a person whose true, fixed,  
7 and permanent house and place of habitation is the state of  
8 Washington. "Washington domiciliary" includes a person who is  
9 residing in rental housing or residing in base housing. In  
10 ascertaining whether a child or surviving spouse or surviving  
11 domestic partner is domiciled in the state of Washington, public  
12 institutions of higher education shall, to the fullest extent  
13 possible, rely upon the standards provided in RCW 28B.15.013.

14 (9) As used in subsection (4) of this section, "fees" includes  
15 all assessments for costs incurred as a condition to a student's full  
16 participation in coursework and related activities at an institution  
17 of higher education.

18 (10) The governing boards of the state universities, the regional  
19 universities, The Evergreen State College, and the community and  
20 technical colleges shall report to the higher education committees of  
21 the legislature by November 15, 2010, and every two years thereafter,  
22 regarding the status of implementation of the waivers under  
23 subsection (4) of this section. The reports shall include the  
24 following data and information:

- 25 (a) Total number of waivers;
- 26 (b) Total amount of tuition waived;
- 27 (c) Total amount of fees waived;
- 28 (d) Average amount of tuition and fees waived per recipient;
- 29 (e) Recipient demographic data that is disaggregated by distinct  
30 ethnic categories within racial subgroups; and
- 31 (f) Recipient income level, to the extent possible.

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