

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
76R2039 JSA-D

S.B. 526
By: Luna
Veterans Affairs
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As Filed

DIGEST

Currently, the cost of tuition per hour at a state-supported institution is about \$69. Several benefits for the State of Texas have been cited as a result of waiving tuition for members of the Texas Military Forces. Some of the benefits include: diversifying the military forces and providing well-trained soldiers to respond to Texas emergencies; providing better educated and more easily trained Texans for emerging technology jobs; and assisting in retention and recruiting of qualified National Guard candidates. Waiving tuition may also respond to the Hopwood v. Texas decision to assist in recruiting minority students for universities. Providing educational assistance to members of the military forces is estimated to cost between \$2.7 and \$5 million depending on the number of applicants. This bill would create a tuition assistance program for all enlisted grades of the military forces in Texas, and sets forth reimbursement procedures for institutions of higher learning.

PURPOSE

As proposed, S.B. 526 creates a tuition assistance program for eligible members of the state military forces, and sets forth provisions regarding tuition exemption and reimbursement procedures with institutions of higher learning.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 431F, Government Code, by adding Section 431.090, as follows:

Sec. 431.090. TUITION ASSISTANCE. Provides tuition assistance to eligible members of the state military forces (soldier) for the purpose of encouraging voluntary membership, improving the soldiers' education level, diversifying the composition of the forces, and enhancing Texas' workforce. Defines "institution of higher education." Sets forth eligibility requirements for a person receiving tuition assistance. Requires the adjutant general (general) to grant tuition assistance to eligible persons, and sets forth consideration requirements for the general. Authorizes the general to grant tuition awards as the general considers necessary to meet recruitment and retention needs. Prohibits the number of tuition awards to members of the Texas State Guard from exceeding 30 for any semester, unless the general finds a compelling need to do so. Sets forth courses for which tuition assistance can be awarded. Prohibits a person from receiving tuition assistance if the person exceeds a certain number of credit hours or semesters. Requires the general to submit a list of tuition assistance recipients to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board by a certain deadline. Requires the coordinating board to determine if there is enough money to fund tuition awards subsequent to receipt of the general's list. Requires the coordinating board to notify the general of insufficient tuition award funds, which will require the general to reduce the number of awards and submit a revised list of awardees.

SECTION 2. Amends Chapter 54D, Education Code, by adding Section 54.2155, as follows:

Sec. 54.2155. PAYMENT OF TUITION ASSISTANCE FOR MEMBERS OF STATE MILITARY FORCES. Requires the coordinating board to use a certain procedure to certify to certain educational institutions the persons granted tuition awards by the general. Requires an educational institution to exempt certain persons from tuition payment, under certain conditions. Prohibits the amount of tuition exemption from exceeding that which a person would be charged

as a Texas resident, under certain conditions regarding the amount of credit hours. Requires the coordinating board to reimburse an educational institution in an equal amount to the amount of tuition exemption granted to a person under Subsection (a), from funds appropriated for the purposes of this section.

SECTION 3. Effective date: January 1, 2000.

SECTION 4. Emergency clause.