

HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

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Overview

This bill extensively clarifies, and also slightly extends eligibility for, the War Orphans Act of 1943.

The principal benefit of this Act has been to waive all tuition and fees for an undergraduate degree program at any Minnesota public postsecondary institution for the children of any Minnesota service member who has died as a direct result of that person's military service. The bill would broaden eligibility to include the surviving spouse of the deceased service member as well.

A secondary benefit of the Act has been to provide those same children with an annual educational stipend of \$750 for fees, books, supplies, and living expenses while pursuing that higher education degree. The bill would ensure that the service member's surviving spouse would get this benefit as well.

The bill would remove the Minnesota residency requirement for eligible spouse and children for obtaining these benefits. Instead, it would rely on the Minnesota residency requirement for the deceased veteran at the time of the veteran's enlistment or reenlistment into the military.

Left unchanged is the absence of any means test or age or time limits on eligibility.

A third benefit of the Act has been to provide a one-time \$750 grant for the higher educational expenses of any veteran who is enrolled in an undergraduate degree program at any approved public or private postsecondary educational institution, provided that: the veteran was a Minnesota resident at the time of enlistment and remains so while using the benefits; and the veteran has exhausted all federal military and veterans related educational benefits for which the person had been entitled.

The bill would slightly narrow the eligibility pool for this one-time \$750 stipend by requiring that the veteran have already exhausted his or her *federal and state* military and veterans educational benefits, instead of merely his or her *federal* military and veterans benefits.

Finally, the bill would specifically require that Minnesota *public* postsecondary institutions continue to participate in this program during both peacetime and during times of war. [In 2006, the UMN publicly acknowledged having somehow discontinued implementing the War Orphans Act at some unknown earlier point in time.]

In contrast, the bill authorizes any participating *private* institution to discontinue participation at the end of any semester or term.

The bill would be effective July 1, 2007.