

HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

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Overview

This bill creates a tuition reimbursement program at Minnesota public colleges and universities for veterans with significant active duty experience, as well as the surviving spouses and children of veterans who have died in active military service or who have VA rated service-connected disabilities of 30% or more. The reimbursement is structured to cover any gap between the full cost of tuition, fees and any other administrative expenses, and the amount of tuition assistance the person receives from all other sources. The program is structured as a reimbursement program, with payment directly to the recipient following successful course completion each semester. The Department of Veterans Affairs is given administrative responsibility for this program. An open and standing appropriation is provided.

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1 Veterans Tuition and Fee Reimbursement Program.

Subd. 1. Definitions.

Veteran incorporates state residency requirements, length of federal active military service, and quickness of return to Minnesota following federal military service, and also includes a person who has met all requirements for being a *veteran*, except that the person is still serving in active military service.

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- **Residency.** At the time of entry into, or within six months of entry into, federal active military service, the person must have been a Minnesota resident or have been enrolled in a public institution of higher education within MnSCU or the UMN.
- **Length of Federal Active Service.** The person must have (cumulatively) served at least two years of federal active duty or been discharged from federal active duty for medical reasons, or have served 90 days or more of federal active duty in a foreign country during a time of hostilities in that country. Requires an honorable discharge after each period of federal active duty.
- **Speed of return to Minnesota.** The person must have returned to Minnesota within six-months of the person's release from active duty, or within six months of the spouse's release from active duty.

Public Institution of Higher Education includes all campuses of MnSCU and the UMN.

Tuition is broadly defined to include tuition and all fees and charges for enrollment and attendance.

Time of hostilities is recognized via an armed forces expeditionary medal or a campaign medal awarded according to presidential order.

Subd. 2. Program Administration. Administrative responsibility is assigned to the Commissioner of Veterans Affairs.

Subd. 3. Tuition Reimbursement; amount. Specifies that the program is a *reimbursement program* upon satisfactory completion of graduate or undergraduate coursework of up to the greater of 128 credits or eight semesters total.

The amount of reimbursement consists of the total cost of the veteran's tuition, less the amount of any tuition or academic fees paid to, or on behalf of, the veteran through any source, including federal and state veterans programs, and any other grants and scholarships specifically intended for tuition.

The commissioner of Veterans Affairs must assist the veteran in applying for all educational benefits that may be available to the veteran.

Subd. 4. Spouses and Children of Deceased or S-C Disabled Veteran. Provides the same tuition reimbursement to the surviving spouse and children of any Minnesota veteran who died while serving in any active military duty, as well as the spouse and children of any veteran with a VA service-connected disability rating of 30% or more.

It appears that the spouse of a deceased veteran must remain unremarried while using the benefits. An eligible spouse has a 10-year window in which to use the benefits.

To be eligible, the child of a disabled or deceased veteran must be aged 18 to 25, inclusive.

Subd. 5. Attendance at other institutions. Is permitted if the course is needed and is

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transferable.

Subd. 6. Child support and Maintenance Agreement. Tuition reimbursement may not be paid to a veteran who is in arrears on child support payments.

Subd. 7. Academic Standing. Reimbursement provided only for coursework graded "C" or above.

Subd. 8. Cost Estimates. The commissioner of Veterans Affairs must make cost estimates for the program.

Subd. 9. Procedures for Application for Reimbursement.

Subd. 10. Standing Appropriation. Provides an open and standing appropriation to the Commissioner of Veterans Affairs for reimbursement grants for this program.

Effective Date. Implied start date of July 1, 2007.