

HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

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Authors: Haws

Subject: Veterans; Survivor Eligibility under the War Orphans Act; Residency Broadened

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Overview

This bill would slightly broaden eligibility for the Minnesota War Orphans Educational Benefits Act among the surviving spouses and children of deceased veterans who have died of service-connected injuries, illnesses or diseases.

Under current law, for a survivor of such veteran to be eligible for the benefits, the veteran must have been a Minnesota resident within six months of entry into the military.

The bill would broaden eligibility for survivors by additionally recognizing Minnesota residency "at any time during the person's military service."

Background:

Survivor benefits under the War Orphans Educational Benefits Act include:

- 1) a stipend of \$750 per semester, while the eligible survivor is successfully pursuing an undergraduate degree; and
- 2) free tuition at a public higher educational institution while the survivor is successfully pursuing an undergraduate degree.

This bill would broaden eligibility for the program very slightly by recognizing the deceased soldier's Minnesota residency "at any time during the person's military service" Thus, the veteran's qualifying residency would no longer be limited to "within six months" of the veteran's date of entry into military service, as under current law.

For example, the bill would extend eligibility for the program to the spouse and child of a person who has entered the military while a resident of another state, but who thereafter

has established residency while serving in the military (such as, while stationed in Minnesota as an active duty recruiter), and who subsequently dies of service-connected causes.

As a practical matter, it is likely that relatively few survivors of deceased veterans would gain eligibility as a result of this bill, primarily because Minnesota has no active duty military bases.

Note: A separate provision of this program provides the \$750 annual stipend to “eligible veterans” who are still living and attending higher education in Minnesota. This bill does not remove the residency requirement for those living veterans. Unchanged by the bill is the requirement that those living “eligible veterans” must have been a Minnesota resident within six months of their entry into the military.