

Regular Session, 2014

SENATE BILL NO. 34

BY SENATOR MORRISH

TOPS. Establishes a cap on TOPS award amounts. (gov sig)

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AN ACT

To enact R.S. 17:3048.1(Y), relative to the monetary amounts of awards granted pursuant to the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students; to provide for maximum award amounts; to provide for adjustments in maximum award amounts; to provide for effectiveness; and to provide for related matters.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

Section 1. R.S. 17:3048.1(Y) is hereby enacted to read as follows:

§3048.1. Program awards; eligibility; amounts; limitations; funding; administration

* * *

Y.(1) Notwithstanding any provision of this Chapter to the contrary, beginning with the 2014-2015 award year and thereafter, the maximum award amount provided by the state to an otherwise qualified student who is the recipient of an award granted pursuant to this Chapter and who enrolls in any public college or university in the state shall not exceed the award amount determined by the administering agency to equal the award amount paid at that public college or university for the 2013-2014 award year, plus ten percent.

(2) For an otherwise qualified student who is the recipient of an award

1 granted pursuant to this Chapter, and who has enrolled in a regionally
 2 accredited independent college or university in the state which is a member of
 3 the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, the
 4 maximum award amount shall not exceed the award amount determined by the
 5 administering agency to equal the weighted average amounts awarded for
 6 students attending public colleges and universities in the state for the 2013-2014
 7 award year, plus ten percent.

8 (3) The maximum award amounts specified in this Subsection shall be
 9 exclusive of any additional amounts awarded to students who qualify to receive
 10 a Performance Award or Honors Award.

11 (4) Beginning with the 2015-2016 fiscal year, and every other year
 12 thereafter, the administering agency shall consider any adjustments necessary
 13 to align the award amounts granted pursuant to this Chapter with the Higher
 14 Education Price Index and recommend any such adjustment to the legislature
 15 for approval during legislative sessions held in odd-numbered years.

16 Section 2. This Act shall become effective upon signature by the governor or, if not
 17 signed by the governor, upon expiration of the time for bills to become law without signature
 18 by the governor, as provided by Article III, Section 18 of the Constitution of Louisiana. If
 19 vetoed by the governor and subsequently approved by the legislature, this Act shall become
 20 effective on the day following such approval.

The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part
 of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Jeanne C. Johnston.

DIGEST

Present law provides as follows relative to the dollar amount awarded to Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) recipients of Opportunity, Performance, or Honors awards:

- (1) For a recipient who attends a La. public college or university to pursue an academic undergraduate degree or skill or occupational training, the amount is an amount determined by the La. Student Financial Assistance Commission (LASFAC) to equal the tuition charged by the college or university attended.
- (2) For a recipient who attends an eligible state nonpublic college or university, the amount is an amount determined by LASFAC to equal the weighted average amount of amounts paid for students attending public colleges and universities that offer academic undergraduate degrees at the baccalaureate level or an amount determined

- by LASFAC to equal the weighted average of amounts paid for students attending public colleges and universities who are enrolled in permitted skill or occupational training, as applicable.
- (3) For a recipient who is eligible to use the award at an out-of-state nonpublic college or university to pursue an academic undergraduate degree, the amount is an amount determined by LASFAC to equal the weighted average of amounts paid for students attending La. public colleges and universities that offer academic undergraduate degrees.
 - (4) Provides an additional \$200 per semester, or \$400 per academic year, to a recipient of a Performance Award, and provides an additional \$400 per semester, or \$800 per academic year, to a recipient of an Honors Award.

Relative to the dollar amount of a TOPS-Tech Award, present law provides as follows:

- (1) For a recipient who attends an eligible La. public college or university that does not offer an academic undergraduate degree at the baccalaureate level or higher to pursue permitted skill or occupational training, the amount equals the actual cost of tuition.
- (2) For a recipient who attends any other eligible postsecondary education institution, the amount equals the weighted average of amounts paid for students attending public institutions.

Proposed law provides that, beginning with the 2014-2015 award year and thereafter:

- (1) The maximum TOPS award amount for a student who enrolls in any state public college or university shall not exceed the amount determined by the administering agency to equal the award amount paid at that public college or university for the 2013-2014 award year plus ten percent.
- (2) The maximum TOPS award amount for a student who enrolls in an eligible state nonpublic college or university shall not exceed the award amount determined by the administering agency to equal the weighted average amounts awarded for students attending public colleges and universities in the state for the 2013-2014 award year, plus ten percent.
- (3) Retains payment of the supplemental amounts established in present law for a recipient of a Performance or Honors award.

Proposed law provides that, beginning with the 2015-2016 fiscal year, and every other year thereafter, the administering agency shall consider any adjustments necessary to align TOPS award amounts with the Higher Education Price Index and recommend any such adjustments to the legislature for approval during legislative sessions held in odd-numbered years.

Effective upon signature of the governor or lapse of time for gubernatorial action.

(Adds R.S. 17:3048.1(Y))