

Regular Session, 2014

SENATE BILL NO. 367

BY SENATOR CROWE

TOPS. Creates the TOPS-Tech Plus award. (8/1/14)

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AN ACT

To amend and reenact R.S. 17:3048.1(H)(2) and to enact R.S. 17:3048.1(B)(6), relative to the Louisiana Taylor Opportunity Program for Students; to provide for the TOPS-Tech Plus Award; to provide relative to initial and continuing eligibility requirements; to provide for award applications; to provide for award amounts; to provide relative to the duration of award eligibility; 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(H)(2) is hereby amended and reenacted and R.S. 17:3048.1(B)(6) is hereby enacted to read as follows:

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

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B.

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(6)(a) Beginning with the 2014-2015 award year and continuing thereafter, as part of the Louisiana Taylor Opportunity Program for Students, any student who has been awarded and maintained eligibility for a TOPS-Tech

1 Award and who has successfully completed the requirements for, and has been
2 awarded, an associate degree with a minimum cumulative grade point average
3 of 2.50 on a 4.00 scale while enrolled in an eligible college or university as
4 provided in Subsection A of this Section, shall qualify for a "TOPS-Tech Plus
5 Award".

6 (b) The state shall financially assist the recipient of a TOPS-Tech Plus
7 Award who enrolls on a full-time basis in a public college or university in this
8 state or a regionally accredited independent college or university in this state
9 that is a member of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and
10 Universities, to pursue an academic associate or undergraduate degree.

11 (c) Any student who applies and qualifies for a TOPS-Tech Plus Award,
12 who enrolled in an eligible college or university to pursue an academic associate
13 or undergraduate degree, shall be awarded by the state the same amount
14 provided to a student who is awarded the Opportunity Award in accordance
15 with Paragraph (A)(2) of this Section.

16 (d) Beginning with the 2014-2015 award year and thereafter, the
17 administering agency shall select up to one hundred students from among those
18 qualifying to receive a TOPS-Tech Plus Award in accordance with selection
19 criteria based upon a student's final cumulative grade point average at the time
20 of graduation with an associate degree. Additional criteria may be established
21 by rule to resolve issues surrounding tie scores.

22 (e) To maintain continued state payment of the amount provided to a
23 recipient of a TOPS-Tech Plus Award, a student shall meet the continuation
24 requirements established for a recipient of the Opportunity Award as provided
25 in Paragraph (A)(4) of this Section.

26 (f) The administering agency shall provide by rule adopted in accordance
27 with the Administrative Procedure Act for the administration of the
28 TOPS-Tech Plus Award, including application and registration procedures,
29 timelines and deadlines, and reporting requirements for eligible colleges and

1 **universities.**

2 * * *

3 H.

4 * * *

5 (2)(a) No student shall be eligible for tuition payment pursuant to this Section

6 for the TOPS-Tech Award for more than two years unless an extension is granted by

7 the administering agency in accordance with its rules.

8 **(b) No student shall be eligible for tuition payment pursuant to this**

9 **Section for the TOPS-Tech Plus Award for more than four semesters or an**

10 **equivalent number of units in an eligible institution that operates on a schedule**

11 **based on units other than semesters, unless an extension is granted by the**

12 **administering agency in accordance with its rules.**

13 * * *

The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Mary Dozier O'Brien.

DIGEST

Crowe (SB 367)

Present law provides a program of merit scholarships for first-time freshmen attending public postsecondary institutions or regionally accredited independent colleges or universities in this state who meet a specified GPA, ACT score, and core curriculum requirements as follows:

- 1. Opportunity Award in the amount of actual tuition for attendance at a public college or university, or the state average of public four-year colleges' tuition for attendance at a regionally accredited independent college or university.
- 2. Performance Award in the amount of actual tuition plus \$200 per semester for attendance at a public college or university, or the state average of public four-year colleges' tuition plus \$200 per semester for attendance at a regionally accredited independent college or university.
- 3. Honors Award in the amount of actual tuition plus \$400 per semester for attendance at a public college or university, or the state average of public four-year colleges' tuition plus \$400 per semester for attendance at a regionally accredited independent college or university.
- 4. TOPS-Tech Award in the amount of actual tuition for those enrolled in an eligible postsecondary institution pursuing nonacademic skills or occupational training.
- 5. TOPS-Tech Early Start Award in the amount of \$150/three-hour or equivalent time course taken by eligible 11th and 12th grade high school students enrolled in Louisiana public postsecondary education and pursuing an industry-based

Coding: Words which are ~~struck through~~ are deletions from existing law; words in **boldface type and underscored** are additions.

occupational or vocational-technical credential.

Proposed law retains present law and establishes an additional award, the TOPS-Tech Plus Award, for TOPS-Tech Award recipients who have been awarded an associate degree with a minimum GPA of 2.50 on a 4.00 scale and who enroll in an eligible college or university to pursue an academic associate or undergraduate degree.

Proposed law provides that the recipient of a TOPS-Tech Plus Award shall receive from the state an amount equal to that provided to recipients of the Opportunity Award.

Proposed law provides that beginning with the 2014-2015 award year and thereafter, the office of student financial assistance is required to select up to 100 students from among those who qualify to receive the TOPS-Tech Plus Award based upon a student's final cumulative GPA at the time of graduation with an associate degree. Authorizes additional criteria to be established by rule to resolve the issue of tie scores.

Proposed law requires TOPS-Tech Plus Award recipients to meet the continuation requirements established in present law for Opportunity Award recipients.

Proposed law limits eligibility for the TOPS-Tech Plus Award to four semesters or an equivalent number of units in an eligible institution that operates on a schedule based on units other than semesters, unless an extension is granted by the administering agency in accordance with its rules.

Proposed law requires the office of student financial assistance to adopt rules in accordance with the APA for the administration of the TOPS-Tech Plus Award.

Effective August 1, 2014.

(Amends R.S. 17:3048.1(H)(2); adds R.S. 17:3048.1(B)(6))