

HOUSE BILL 2179

By Rich

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 7; Title 49, Chapter 8 and Title 49, Chapter 9, relative to tuition and fees at public institutions of higher education.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 7, Part 1, is amended by adding the following language as a new, appropriately designated section:

49-7-1__.

(a) As used in this section, unless the context otherwise requires:

(1) "Academic year" means a period beginning with a fall semester and concluding with the beginning of the next fall semester;

(2) "Continuous enrollment" means the student is enrolled in at least two (2) semesters during an academic year;

(3) "Full-time enrollment" means the student meets the institution's definition of a full-time student;

(4) "Public institution of higher education" or "institution" means any four-year or two-year institution operated by the board of regents or the University of Tennessee system. "Public institution of higher education" does not include a Tennessee college of applied technology;

(5) "Tuition" includes tuition, maintenance fees, course fees, program service fees, student activity fees, registration or matriculation fees and any other fee that a student must pay to attend the public institution of higher education.

"Tuition" does not include late registration fees, returned check fees, parking

finer, library fines or any other fee that can be avoided and the costs of books and supplies, dormitory or other housing and meal plans or other board; and

(6) "Tuition freeze" or "tuition freeze program" means a program under which a student's tuition is calculated based on the rates for tuition that were in effect for the academic year in which the student entered the institution or otherwise qualified for the tuition freeze program, not on the rates for the academic year in which the student is enrolled.

(b) Each public institution of higher education shall establish a tuition freeze program pursuant to which a student's tuition shall be frozen at the rates for tuition in effect at the time the student first enters the institution; provided, that the student:

(1) Qualifies for in-state classification under the rules of the board of regents or the University of Tennessee system as applicable to the institution attended;

(2) Maintains full-time continuous enrollment; unless the student is granted a medical or personal leave. Medical or personal leaves shall be granted in accordance with the rules and regulations promulgated by the Tennessee student assistance corporation for the Tennessee HOPE scholarship program; and

(3) Maintains a cumulative collegiate grade point average of at least 3.0 on the institution's grading scale.

(c) A student is eligible for the tuition freeze until the first of the following events:

(1) The student earns a baccalaureate degree; or

(2) Four (4) years have passed from the date the student first entered the institution.

(d) If a student at any time fails to meet one (1) of the conditions of subsection (b) for participation in the tuition freeze program, then the student shall become ineligible for the tuition freeze program and shall not be able to regain eligibility.

(e) If a student in the tuition freeze program is granted a medical or personal leave of absence, then tuition at the rates applicable when the student initially entered the institution shall continue to be in effect when the student returns from the leave. The student is eligible for the tuition freeze until the sum of the number of years the student attended the public institution of higher education prior to the leave of absence and the number of years of attendance after the leave of absence equals four (4) years or the student earns a baccalaureate degree whichever occurs first; provided, that the student maintains eligibility under subsection (b).

(f) If a student eligible for a tuition freeze program transfers from one public institution of higher education to another, then the student shall remain eligible for the tuition freeze program; however, the student's tuition shall be calculated at the rates of the institution to which the student transfers that are in effect at the time of the student's transfer.

(g) A student who is enrolled at a public institution of higher education for the 2013-2014 academic year shall be eligible to receive the tuition freeze, if the student enrolls at a public institution of higher education for the 2014-2015 academic year and meets all eligibility requirements of the program. The student's tuition shall be calculated at the rates in effect at the institution for the 2014-2015 academic year throughout the remainder of the student's attendance at the institution or until the student fails to qualify for the program or reaches a terminating event under subsection (c), whichever occurs first. A student receiving the tuition freeze under this subsection may transfer to another public institution of higher education and receive the tuition freeze under subsection (f).

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it, and shall apply to students enrolled at public institutions of higher education for the 2014-2015 academic year and academic years thereafter.