

SENATE BILL 2177

By Johnson

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49,
Chapter 4, Part 10, relative to tuition assistance for
Tennessee national guard members.

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

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-4-1003, is amended by deleting subdivision (2) and substituting instead:

(2) "Educational institution" means any public university, college, community college, or college of applied technology or any private college or university that is regionally accredited and has its primary campus domiciled in this state;

SECTION 2. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-4-1003, is further amended by deleting subdivision (8) and substituting instead:

(8) "Tuition" means the total semester, quarter, or classroom hour cost of instruction delineated in the catalog of an educational institution, including all mandatory fees.

SECTION 3. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-4-1003, is further amended by inserting the following as new, appropriately designated subdivisions and redesignating the existing subdivisions accordingly:

(_) "Educational program" means a program offered by an educational institution through which a student can earn a certificate or diploma, but does not mean a doctoral program;

(_) "Officer-producing program" means a reserve officer training corps program offered through a college or university;

(_) "Semester hour" means the credit hour used by an educational institution, if the institution is on a semester system, or its equivalent if the institution is on a system other than a semester system, and includes each semester hour attempted, whether remedial or for credit toward a degree, but does not include any semester hour attempted before graduating from high school or earning a high school equivalency diploma;

SECTION 4. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-4-1004, is amended by deleting subsection (b) and substituting instead:

(b) Upon successful application by the eligible member attending a public educational institution, the department of military shall pay the educational institution an amount equal to one hundred percent (100%) of the maximum resident in-state tuition charged by the institution attended for the educational program to which the member successfully applied, less all other state or federal financial assistance as described in § 49-4-1005. Such financial assistance must be credited first to the member's tuition, subject to § 49-4-1005.

SECTION 5. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-4-1005, is amended by deleting the section and substituting instead:

The following are limitations and conditions on eligibility for tuition reimbursement under the program:

(1) A member must maintain satisfactory academic progress and, for undergraduate, vocational, or technical programs, a minimum grade point average of 2.0, and for a master's program, a minimum grade point average of 3.0, as determined by the educational institution attended for the semester for which the member applies for tuition reimbursement;

(2) A member receiving tuition reimbursement under this part who ceases to be eligible for the reimbursement because the member fails to maintain satisfactory academic progress or the required grade point average at the end of any semester may

regain eligibility for tuition reimbursement at the end of any subsequent semester in which satisfactory academic progress and the required grade point average are established;

(3) Tuition reimbursement must be paid to an educational institution on behalf of a member for no more than one hundred twenty (120) semester hours or eight (8) full-time equivalent semesters toward a member's first bachelor's degree. A member ceases to be eligible for tuition reimbursement under this part upon the first of the following events to occur:

(A) The member has attempted one hundred twenty (120) semester hours toward the member's first bachelor's degree, inclusive of any postsecondary semester hours earned prior to receipt of tuition reimbursement under this part;

(B) The member has completed eight (8) full-time equivalent semesters toward the member's first bachelor's degree; or

(C) The member has earned a first bachelor's degree;

(4) Tuition reimbursement must be paid to an educational institution on behalf of a member for no more than forty (40) semester hours toward a member's first master's degree. A member is no longer eligible for tuition reimbursement under this part upon the first of the following events to occur:

(A) The member has attempted forty (40) semester hours toward the member's first master's degree, inclusive of any post-baccalaureate semester hours earned prior to receipt of tuition reimbursement under this part; or

(B) The member has earned a first master's degree;

(5) Tuition reimbursement must be paid to an educational institution on behalf of a member for no more than twenty-four (24) semester hours toward a certificate or

diploma from a vocational or technical program. A member is no longer eligible for tuition reimbursement under this part when the member has attempted twenty-four (24) semester hours toward a certificate or diploma from a vocational or technical program, inclusive of any semester hours earned in that same vocational or technical program prior to receipt of tuition reimbursement under this part. It is not required that tuition reimbursement under this part apply toward a member's first certificate or diploma from a vocational or technical program;

(6) Notwithstanding subdivisions (3) and (4), a member who is enrolled in an officer-producing program at an educational institution is exempt from the semester and semester-hour limits for tuition reimbursement under this part for up to thirty (30) additional semester hours for the limited purpose of allowing the member to complete the courses required to accept a commission upon graduation with the member's first bachelor's or master's degree;

(7) Tuition reimbursement amounts that a member is eligible to receive under this part must be offset and reduced by the aggregate amount of state and federal education financial assistance received by the member during the semester or educational term, unless federal law or regulation requires otherwise, in which case federal priority controls. Such assistance includes, but is not limited to, the Tennessee Promise scholarship, the Tennessee Reconnect grant, the Tennessee HOPE scholarship, and similar state assistance, as such assistance programs or grants may be amended, as well as Tennessee student assistance awards, the federal Pell grant, Montgomery GI Bill benefits, Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits, and federal tuition assistance program benefits;

(8) Members eligible for federal tuition assistance must apply for and use federal tuition assistance;

(9) Members receiving a reserve officer training corps scholarship must exhaust the benefits of the reserve officer training corps scholarship in order to be eligible for tuition reimbursement under this part;

(10) Members must be in good standing and currently active in the Tennessee national guard; and

(11) Members must submit an application for tuition reimbursement under this part within ninety (90) days of course completion.

SECTION 6. This act shall take effect July 1, 2020, the public welfare requiring it.