

Expanding the Kansas National Guard Educational Assistance Act and EMERGE Program; HB 2185

HB 2185 expands the Kansas National Guard Educational Assistance Act (Act) to include eligibility for dependents of National Guard members and expands the Kansas National Guard Educational Master's for Enhanced Readiness and Global Excellence (EMERGE) Program to include other advanced degrees.

Kansas National Guard Education Assistance Act

Under continuing law, the Kansas National Guard Educational Assistance Program provides for the payment of tuition and fees by the State of Kansas for eligible members of the Kansas National Guard enrolled at Kansas educational institutions. The bill amends the Act to also include eligible dependents of Kansas National Guard members. The bill allows eligible Guard members to either personally participate or sponsor a dependent to participate in the Kansas National Guard Educational Assistance Program.

Qualifications for Assistance

Eligible Guard members. To qualify for assistance under the Act, the bill requires an eligible Guard member to:

- Hold a high school diploma or high school equivalency credential;
- Be enrolled at a Kansas educational institution; and
- Not hold a baccalaureate or higher academic degree.

The bill limits an eligible Guard member to sponsor only one dependent to participate in the Kansas National Guard Educational Assistance Program during the member's service.

Dependents. To qualify for assistance as a dependent under the Act, the bill requires a dependent to:

- Hold a high school diploma or high school equivalency credential;
- Be enrolled at a Kansas educational institution;
- Not hold a baccalaureate or higher academic degree; and
- Complete and submit the Kansas student aid application with the State Board of Regents (Regents).

Limitations on Assistance

The bill provides that assistance available to a dependent under the program will be subject to the availability of funds after educational benefits are fully funded for all participating eligible Guard members.

The bill would clarify that the Kansas National Guard Educational Assistance Program will not pay for any repeated courses or courses taken in excess of degree requirements.

Definitions

The bill defines “dependent” as an individual who is registered as an eligible dependent of the sponsoring eligible Guard member in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System. The bill also modifies the definitions of “Kansas educational institution” and “eligible guard member.”

Rules and Regulations

The bill authorizes the Regents to adopt rules and regulations to administer the Act, changed from a requirement for rule and regulation adoption.

EMERGE Program

Under continuing law, the EMERGE Program provides for the payment of tuition and fees by the State of Kansas for eligible members of the Kansas National Guard enrolled in master’s degree programs at Kansas educational institutions. The bill expands the EMERGE Program to include other advanced degree programs.

Definitions

The bill defines the following terms:

- “Advanced degree” means a master’s degree, professional degree, or doctorate awarded to an eligible Guard member upon satisfactory completion of the course work requirements of such degree program offered or maintained by a Kansas educational institution;
- “Doctorate” means a degree requiring three or more academic years of full-time academic study or the equivalent in part-time attendance that follows the successful completion of a baccalaureate or master’s degree. A “doctorate” may be either a research or a professional practice degree;
- “Master’s degree” means a degree requiring no less than one year of academic work or the equivalent in part-time attendance and follows the successful completion of a baccalaureate degree; and

- “Professional degree” means a degree that requires no less than three years of full-time study or the equivalent in part-time attendance that follows the successful completion of a baccalaureate degree, such as a juris doctor degree or a physician’s assistant degree.

The bill also modifies the definition of “eligible guard member” to include non-concurrent Guard members accepted into an eligible professional degree program if they are qualified to join the Kansas National Guard.

Participation Requirements

Continuing law requires National Guard members participating in the EMERGE Program to agree, in writing, to serve actively and in good standing for no less than 48 months following the completion of the program. The bill modifies the service requirement to require active service for no less than 48 months for a master’s degree and active service for no less than 72 months for a doctorate or professional degree.

Continuing law requires participating National Guard members to remain in good standing at their Kansas educational institution, make satisfactory progress toward completion of the requirements of their degree, and maintain a grade point average (GPA) of no less than 2.75 in order to continue their participation in the EMERGE Program. The bill modifies the GPA requirements to require a GPA of no less than 2.75 for a master’s degree and a GPA of no less than 3.0 for a doctorate or professional degree.

Limitations on Assistance

The bill clarifies that the EMERGE Program will not pay for any repeated courses or courses taken in excess of degree requirements.