

1 STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2 2nd Session of the 59th Legislature (2024)

3 COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE
4 FOR

5 SENATE BILL 1311

6 By: Pugh

7 COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

8 An Act relating to higher education; creating the
9 Veterans Entering Teaching (VET) Act; providing short
10 title; defining terms; creating the Veterans Entering
11 Teaching (VET) Program to provide tuition and
12 mandatory fee assistance to certain eligible
13 students; providing for eligibility; requiring
14 eligible students to execute certain agreement;
15 providing contents of agreement; providing
16 eligibility retention requirements; providing for
17 amount of assistance; prohibiting assistance for
18 certain courses or units; directing assistance to be
19 allocated from certain fund; prohibiting individuals
20 who accept certain assistance from also being
21 eligible for certain program; directing certain
22 federal benefits to be exhausted first; establishing
23 assistance cap for each academic year; allowing funds
24 to be set aside for full commitment; requiring
25 repayment of assistance for failure to meet certain
26 requirement; providing for calculation of repayment
27 amount; providing for deposit of repayment amounts in
28 certain fund; allowing for application of hardship
29 waiver; providing for promulgation of rules; creating
30 the Veterans Entering Teaching (VET) Revolving Fund;
31 specifying source of fund; providing for
32 expenditures; providing purpose of fund; providing
33 for codification; providing an effective date; and
34 declaring an emergency.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

1 SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
2 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 3234 of Title 70, unless there
3 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

4 A. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Veterans
5 Entering Teaching (VET) Act".

6 B. As used in this act:

7 1. "Eligible student" means a student who was discharged under
8 honorable conditions from the United States Armed Forces who enrolls
9 in an Oklahoma educational institution regardless of the home of
10 record for the student;

11 2. "Home of record" means the place where a student was living
12 when he or she enlisted or was commissioned into the United States
13 Armed Forces or reenlisted in the United States Armed Forces;

14 3. "Oklahoma educational institution" means an institution of
15 higher education within The Oklahoma State System of Higher
16 Education; and

17 4. "Program" means the Veterans Entering Teaching (VET)
18 Program.

19 C. There is hereby created the Veterans Entering Teaching (VET)
20 Program to provide tuition and mandatory fee assistance to eligible
21 students to earn a degree from an approved teacher preparation
22 program at an Oklahoma educational institution if they agree to
23 teach in a school district in this state for three (3) consecutive
24 years.

1 D. To be eligible to participate in the Program during the
2 2024-2025 academic year and thereafter, an individual shall:

3 1. Enroll in an Oklahoma educational institution;

4 2. Submit an application on a form prescribed by the Oklahoma
5 State Regents for Higher Education;

6 3. Declare a major in an approved Oklahoma teacher preparation
7 program leading to a standard teaching certificate; and

8 4. Execute an agreement pursuant to subsection E of this
9 section.

10 E. An eligible student who meets the criteria of subsection D
11 of this section shall execute an agreement stating that he or she
12 shall:

13 1. Agree to earn a bachelor's degree from an approved teacher
14 preparation program at an Oklahoma educational institution leading
15 to a standard teaching certificate;

16 2. Agree to meet the requirements of Section 6-187 of Title 70
17 of the Oklahoma Statutes to earn a standard teaching certificate;
18 and

19 3. Agree to teach in a school district in this state for three
20 (3) consecutive years. The individual shall not be required to
21 teach at the same school district for three (3) consecutive years.

22 F. To retain eligibility for the Program, an eligible student
23 shall:

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1 1. Maintain good academic standing and satisfactory academic
2 progress while enrolled in an Oklahoma educational institution
3 according to the institution's standards; and

4 2. After earning a bachelor's degree from an approved Oklahoma
5 teacher preparation program, submit annual proof of employment with
6 a school district in this state to the Oklahoma State Regents for
7 Higher Education.

8 G. 1. The amount of assistance shall be equivalent to the
9 amount of tuition and mandatory fees for courses in which the
10 eligible student enrolls for completion of a bachelor's degree from
11 an approved Oklahoma teacher preparation program. Assistance shall
12 not be allowed for courses or other postsecondary units taken in
13 excess of the requirements for completion of a bachelor's degree or
14 taken more than five (5) years after the individual's first semester
15 of enrollment in an Oklahoma educational institution.

16 2. Assistance provided pursuant to this subsection shall be
17 allocated to the Oklahoma educational institution from the Veterans
18 Entering Teaching (VET) Revolving Fund created pursuant to Section 2
19 of this act.

20 H. An eligible student who accepts assistance pursuant to this
21 section shall not also be eligible for the Inspired to Teach Program
22 created in Section 698.1 of Title 70 of the Oklahoma Statutes.

1 I. An eligible student seeking tuition and fee assistance
2 pursuant to this section who is eligible for federal education
3 benefits shall exhaust all available federal benefits first.

4 J. Subject to the availability of funding, the amount of
5 assistance provided to eligible students shall not exceed Five
6 Million Dollars (\$5,000,000.00) for the 2024-2025 academic year and
7 every academic year thereafter. Assistance shall be provided on a
8 first-come, first-served basis and shall be granted without any
9 limitation other than the amount of funds available for the Program
10 and the number of eligible students who apply. The State Regents
11 may, at the time assistance is provided on behalf of an eligible
12 student, set aside funds in the Veterans Entering Teaching (VET)
13 Revolving Fund created pursuant to Section 2 of this act for the
14 full commitment made to the student.

15 K. An individual who has received Program assistance pursuant
16 to this section and who fails to comply with the agreement executed
17 pursuant to subsection E of this section shall be required to repay
18 an amount to be calculated as follows:

19 1. Determine the total amount of Program assistance provided
20 pursuant to the provisions of this section;

21 2. Divide the amount determined in paragraph 1 of this
22 subsection by twelve (12); and

23 3. Multiply the amount determined in paragraph 2 of this
24 subsection by the number of months the individual did not fulfill

1 the requirements of the agreement executed pursuant to subsection E
2 of this section. Repayments shall be deposited into the Veterans
3 Entering Teaching (VET) Revolving Fund created pursuant to Section 2
4 of this act.

5 L. An individual who has received Program assistance pursuant
6 to this section and who fails to comply with the agreement executed
7 pursuant to subsection E of this section due to hardship
8 circumstances may request a waiver from repayment from the Oklahoma
9 State Regents for Higher Education.

10 M. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education shall
11 promulgate rules to implement the provisions of this section.

12 SECTION 2. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
13 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 3235 of Title 70, unless there
14 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

15 There is hereby created in the State Treasury a revolving fund
16 for the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education to be designated
17 the "Veterans Entering Teaching (VET) Revolving Fund". The fund
18 shall be a continuing fund, not subject to fiscal year limitations,
19 and shall consist of all monies received by the State Regents from
20 legislative appropriations provided for the purpose of implementing
21 the Veterans Entering Teaching (VET) Program created in Section 1 of
22 this act. All monies accruing to the credit of the fund are hereby
23 appropriated and may be budgeted and expended by the State Regents
24 for the purpose provided for in this section. Expenditures from the

1 fund shall be made upon warrants issued by the State Treasurer
2 against claims filed as prescribed by law with the Director of the
3 Office of Management and Enterprise Services for approval and
4 payment.

5 SECTION 3. This act shall become effective July 1, 2024.

6 SECTION 4. It being immediately necessary for the preservation
7 of the public peace, health, or safety, an emergency is hereby
8 declared to exist, by reason whereof this act shall take effect and
9 be in full force from and after its passage and approval.

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