

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

1st Session of the 59th Legislature (2023)

SENATE BILL 55

By: Stanley

AS INTRODUCED

An Act relating to the Oklahoma National Guard Educational Assistance Act; amending Section 1, Chapter 24, O.S.L. 2022 (70 O.S. Supp. 2022, Section 3231), which relates to creation of the Oklahoma National Guard Educational Assistance Program; increasing maximum number of hours in a graduate program for which assistance may be provided; modifying eligibility criteria; removing language regarding repayment of assistance under certain circumstances; providing for ineligibility under certain circumstances; modifying language regarding submission of certain hardship waiver request; updating statutory references; providing an effective date; and declaring an emergency.

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

SECTION 1. AMENDATORY Section 1, Chapter 24, O.S.L. 2022 (70 O.S. Supp. 2022, Section 3231), is amended to read as follows:

Section 3231. A. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Oklahoma National Guard Educational Assistance Act".

B. As used in this act:

1. "Oklahoma educational institution" means an institution of higher education within The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education;

1 2. "Eligible Guard member" means a current member of the
2 Oklahoma National Guard in good standing who has a high school
3 diploma or who has completed General Educational Development (GED)
4 requirements and who has secured admission to and enrolled in an
5 Oklahoma educational institution;

6 3. "Graduate program" means a program offered by an Oklahoma
7 educational institution that leads to the award of a master's
8 degree;

9 4. "Program" means the Oklahoma National Guard Educational
10 Assistance Program established pursuant to the provisions of this
11 section; and

12 5. "Undergraduate program" means a program offered by an
13 Oklahoma educational institution that leads to the award of an
14 associate's degree or a baccalaureate degree.

15 C. There is hereby created the Oklahoma National Guard
16 Educational Assistance Program to provide assistance to eligible
17 Guard members who enroll in an Oklahoma educational institution.
18 Subject to the availability of funds, the amount of assistance shall
19 be equivalent to the amount of resident tuition, mandatory fees, and
20 academic service fees for courses in which the eligible Guard member
21 is enrolled, not to exceed a maximum of eighteen (18) credit hours
22 each semester.

23 1. The amount of assistance provided to an eligible Guard
24 member enrolled in an undergraduate program shall not exceed a

1 maximum of one hundred twenty (120) credit hours in pursuit of an
2 associate's degree and/or a baccalaureate degree.

3 2. Subject to the assistance for eligible Guard members
4 enrolled in undergraduate programs being fully funded, assistance
5 shall be provided to an eligible Guard member with a baccalaureate
6 degree enrolled in a graduate program. The amount of assistance
7 provided to an eligible Guard member enrolled in a graduate program
8 shall not exceed a maximum of ~~forty (40)~~ sixty (60) credit hours in
9 pursuit of a master's degree.

10 3. Assistance provided pursuant to this section shall be
11 granted without any limitation other than the amount of funds
12 available for the Program and the number of eligible Guard members
13 who apply.

14 4. Assistance allowed by this section shall not be allowed for
15 courses taken in excess of the requirements for completion of an
16 undergraduate program or a graduate program, whichever is applicable
17 for the eligible Guard member.

18 D. Assistance provided pursuant to this section shall be
19 allocated to the Oklahoma educational institution from the Oklahoma
20 National Guard Educational Assistance Revolving Fund created
21 pursuant to ~~Section 2 of this act~~ Section 3232 of this title.

22 E. To be eligible to apply for the Program, an eligible Guard
23 member shall÷

1 ~~1. Have have at least ~~one (1) year~~ ninety (90) days remaining~~
2 on his or her enlistment contract at the beginning of any semester
3 for which the member applies for assistance pursuant to this
4 section;

5 ~~2. Agree in writing to complete his or her current service~~
6 ~~obligation in the Oklahoma National Guard; and~~

7 ~~3. Agree in writing to serve actively in good standing with the~~
8 ~~Oklahoma National Guard for not less than twenty-four (24) months~~
9 ~~after completion of the last semester for which the member receives~~
10 ~~assistance pursuant to this section.~~

11 F. To retain eligibility for the Program, an eligible Guard
12 member shall:

13 1. Maintain good academic standing and satisfactory academic
14 progress according to standards of the Oklahoma educational
15 institution in which the member is enrolled;

16 2. Maintain the requirements for retention and degree
17 completion as established by the Oklahoma educational institution in
18 which the member is enrolled;

19 3. Maintain a minimum grade point average of 2.0 on a 4.0
20 scale; and

21 4. Maintain satisfactory participation in the Oklahoma National
22 Guard.

23 G. An eligible Guard member seeking assistance pursuant to the
24 provisions of this section shall submit an application on a form

1 prescribed by the Military Department of the State of Oklahoma to
2 the Educational Service Office of the Military Department prior to
3 the semester for which assistance is sought. The eligible Guard
4 member's Commander or his or her designee shall confirm a member's
5 standing and eligibility to the Oklahoma educational institution in
6 which the student is enrolled.

7 H. The eligible Guard member's Commander may deny an
8 application submitted by an eligible Guard member for continued
9 Program assistance if he or she fails to comply with the provisions
10 of paragraph 1, 2, or 3 of subsection F of this section.

11 I. An eligible Guard member who has received Program assistance
12 pursuant to the provisions of this section and who fails to comply
13 with the provisions of paragraph 4 of subsection F of this section
14 shall be ~~required to repay an amount to be calculated as follows:~~

15 ~~1. Determine the total amount of assistance provided pursuant~~
16 ~~to the provisions of this section;~~

17 ~~2. Divide the amount determined in paragraph 1 of this~~
18 ~~subsection by twenty-four (24); and~~

19 ~~3. Multiply the amount determined in paragraph 2 of this~~
20 ~~subsection by the number of months the member did not fulfill the~~
21 ~~requirements of paragraph 4 of subsection F of this section.~~

22 ~~Repayments shall be deposited into the Oklahoma National Guard~~
23 ~~Educational Assistance Revolving Fund created pursuant to Section 2~~
24 ~~of this act ineligible for future assistance.~~

1 ~~J.~~ An eligible Guard member ~~who has received Program assistance~~
2 ~~pursuant to the provisions of this section and~~ who fails to comply
3 with the provisions of paragraph 4 of subsection F of this section
4 due to hardship circumstances may ~~request a waiver from repayment.~~
5 ~~A~~ submit a waiver request ~~shall be submitted~~ in writing to the
6 Adjutant General.

7 ~~K.~~ J. By July 1 annually, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher
8 Education shall notify the Adjutant General of the amount of funding
9 available in the Oklahoma National Guard Educational Assistance
10 Revolving Fund created pursuant to ~~Section 2 of this act~~ Section
11 3232 of this title.

12 ~~L.~~ K. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education shall
13 promulgate rules to implement the provisions of ~~this act~~ the
14 Oklahoma National Guard Educational Assistance Act including
15 deadlines for submission of applications required by subsection G of
16 this section. The Adjutant General may promulgate regulations to
17 implement the provisions of this act.

18 SECTION 2. This act shall become effective July 1, 2023.

19 SECTION 3. It being immediately necessary for the preservation
20 of the public peace, health, or safety, an emergency is hereby
21 declared to exist, by reason whereof this act shall take effect and
22 be in full force from and after its passage and approval.

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24 59-1-766 EB 12/20/2022 9:17:38 AM