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H.561

Introduced by Representative Harrison of Chittenden

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Education; scholarships; veterans; educational assistance

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to create the Vermont Veterans Educational Assistance Program to enable veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces to take courses with reduced tuition at a Vermont State College.

An act relating to the Vermont Veterans Educational Assistance Program

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. TITLE

This act shall be known as the Vermont Veterans Educational Assistance

Act.

Sec. 2. 16 V.S.A. chapter 87, subchapter 4B is added to read:

Subchapter 4B. Veterans

§ 2858. VERMONT VETERANS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE

PROGRAM

(a) As used in this section:

1           (1) “Time of hostilities” means any action by the U.S. Armed Forces  
2           that is recognized by the issuance of a Presidential proclamation or a  
3           Presidential executive order and in which the Armed Forces expeditionary  
4           medal or other campaign service medals are awarded according to Presidential  
5           executive order.

6           (2) “Veteran” means:

7           (A) A person who served in the U.S. Armed Forces, a Reserve  
8           component of the Armed Forces, or the Vermont National Guard, excluding a  
9           member of the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps and a member whose only  
10           service has been attendance at a service academy, and who meets all of the  
11           following qualifications:

12           (i) at the time of entering federal active duty service, the person  
13           was one of the following:

14                   (I) a Vermont resident;

15                   (II) a Vermont resident within six months of entering such  
16           service; or

17                   (III) enrolled at a Vermont State College;

18           (ii) the person meets one of the following requirements:

19                   (I) he or she served at least one year of federal active duty;

1                   (II) he or she served less than one year of federal active duty  
2                   and received an honorable discharge for medical reasons directly connected  
3                   with such service;

4                   (III) he or she served less than one year of federal active duty  
5                   and was discharged prior to August 11, 1967; or

6                   (IV) he or she served less than one year of federal active duty  
7                   in a foreign country during a time of hostilities in that foreign country;

8                   (iii) the person received an honorable discharge after leaving each  
9                   period of federal active duty service; and

10                  (iv) the person returned to Vermont within six months after  
11                  leaving federal active duty service, or, if married to a person in continued  
12                  military service stationed outside this State, returned to this State within six  
13                  months after his or her spouse left service or was stationed within this State.

14                  (B) A person who otherwise qualifies under subdivision (A) of this  
15                  subdivision (2) but has not left federal active duty service and has served at  
16                  least one year of federal active duty or has served for less than one year of  
17                  federal active duty in a foreign country during a time of hostilities in that  
18                  foreign country and who can provide documentation demonstrating an  
19                  honorable service record.

20                  (b) The Vermont Veterans Educational Assistance Program (Program) is  
21                  created, under which a veteran who meets the eligibility requirements in

1 subsection (c) of this section is entitled to take courses with reduced tuition at a  
2 Vermont State College. A veteran attending a Vermont State College under  
3 this Program shall be charged the applicable resident tuition rate, regardless of  
4 the residency status of the member. The Corporation shall pay half of this  
5 tuition charge on behalf of the veteran under the Program, subject to the  
6 appropriation of funds by the General Assembly specifically for this purpose.  
7 The veteran shall be responsible for the other half of the tuition charge. The  
8 tuition benefit paid by the Corporation under the Program shall be conditioned  
9 upon the veteran's executing a promissory note obligating the veteran to repay  
10 the veteran's tuition benefit, in whole or in part, if the veteran's benefit is  
11 terminated pursuant to subdivision (d)(1) of this section.

12 (c) To be eligible for the Program, an individual shall satisfy all of the  
13 following requirements:

14 (1) be a veteran;

15 (2) be enrolled at a Vermont State College in a program that leads to an  
16 undergraduate certificate or degree;

17 (3) have not previously earned an undergraduate bachelor's degree;

18 (4) continually demonstrate satisfactory academic progress as

19 determined by criteria established by the Corporation in consultation with the

20 Vermont State Colleges; and

1           (5) have exhausted any post-September 11, 2001 tuition benefits and  
2           other federally funded military tuition assistance; provided, however, that this  
3           subdivision shall not apply to Montgomery GI Bill benefits, post-  
4           September 11, 2001 educational program housing allowances, federal  
5           educational entitlements, National Guard scholarship grants, loans under  
6           section 2856 of this title, and other nontuition benefits.

7           (d)(1) The Corporation may terminate the educational assistance provided  
8           an individual under the Program if:

9                   (A) the individual is dismissed from the educational institution in  
10                  which the individual is enrolled under the Program for academic or  
11                  disciplinary reasons; or

12                   (B) the individual withdraws from the educational institution in  
13                  which the individual is enrolled under the Program without good cause.

14           (2) If an individual's educational assistance is terminated pursuant to  
15           subdivision (1) of this subsection, the individual shall reimburse the  
16           Corporation for the tuition paid under the Program, pursuant to the terms of an  
17           interest-free reimbursement promissory note signed by the individual at the  
18           time of entering the Program, shall be responsible on a pro rata basis for the  
19           remaining tuition cost for the current semester or any courses in which the  
20           individual is currently enrolled, and shall be ineligible to receive future  
21           educational assistance under the Program.

1       (e) If an individual is dismissed for academic or disciplinary reasons from  
2       any postsecondary educational institution before receiving tuition benefits  
3       under the Program, the Corporation may make a determination regarding the  
4       individual's eligibility to receive educational assistance under the Program.

5       (f)(1) The Corporation shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines  
6       necessary to implement the provisions of this section, which shall include  
7       eligibility, application, and acceptance requirements; data sharing guidelines;  
8       and the criteria for determining "good cause" as used in subdivision (d)(1)(B)  
9       of this section.

10       (2) The Vermont State Colleges shall adopt policies and procedures for  
11       the enrollment of veterans under the Program. These policies and procedures  
12       shall be consistent with the policies, procedures, and guidelines adopted by the  
13       Corporation under subdivision (1) of this subsection.

14       (g) On or before November 1 of each year, the Chancellor of the Vermont  
15       State Colleges shall report to the Governor and the House and Senate  
16       Committees on Education regarding the number of veterans enrolled during the  
17       prior fiscal year who are receiving educational assistance under the Program  
18       and, to the extent available, the courses or program in which the veterans are  
19       enrolled. The provisions of 2 V.S.A. § 20(d) (expiration of reports) shall not  
20       apply to the reports to be made under this subsection.

1       Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

2           This act shall take effect on July 1, 2018 and the tuition benefits established  
3           under the Vermont Veterans Educational Assistance Program shall be available  
4           to eligible veterans enrolled in institutions under the Program starting on or  
5           after January 1, 2019.