

HOUSE SUMMARY OF SENATE AMENDMENTS**HB 77****2025 Regular Session****Turner**

TOPS: Adds the Excellence award level for students who score 31 or higher on the ACT and allows award qualification based on the Classic Learning Test for certain students

Synopsis of Senate Amendments

1. Removes authority of certain students to apply unused award amounts to medical or dental school and the requirement for repayment unless certain conditions are met.
2. Adds Excellence Award eligibility for students attending institutions that are members of the La. Assoc. of Independent Colleges and Universities (LAICU).
3. Removes increase in Opportunity Award amount for students attending certain institutions.
4. Removes qualification for a TOPS-Tech award based on the attainment of certain early college credits.

Digest of Bill as Finally Passed by Senate**TOPS award levels**

Present law provides for the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS), a merit scholarship program. Provides for four award levels based on high school academic criteria, including completion of a specific core curriculum, a minimum GPA on that core curriculum, and a minimum ACT score: TOPS-Tech, Opportunity, Performance, and Honors, which is the highest award level for students who score a 27 or higher on the ACT. Proposed law creates Excellence, a new award level, for students who score 31 or higher on the ACT and enroll in a public college or university or an institution that is a member of the La. Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (LAICU).

Award amounts

Present law ties the calculation of award amounts to the amount of tuition charged at a given institution during the 2016-2017 academic year. Proposed law retains present law except provides that for the Excellence award, the award amount is \$12,000 or the amount of tuition and mandatory fees, whichever is less, at a public institution and \$8,500 or the amount of tuition and mandatory fees, whichever is less, at a LAICU institution.

Award qualification

Present law sets a minimum ACT score for each award level and allows qualification upon attainment of an equivalent concordant score on the SAT. Proposed law, applicable to graduates of approved nonpublic schools and approved home study programs, also allows this upon the attainment of an equivalent concordant score on the Classic Learning Test.

National Guard stipends

Present law provides that students who qualify for both TOPS and a National Guard tuition exemption as provided in present law receive the latter tuition exemption but also receive a stipend based on the TOPS award level for which they qualify. Proposed law adds a higher stipend for these students who qualify for an Excellence award.

(Amends R.S. 17:5002(A), (E)(1) and (3), and (G), 5025(intro. para.), 5029(B)(3)(b)(ii) and (iii) and (D)(1)(intro. para.), 5041(intro. para.), (1)(c), and (4), and 5043(1); Adds R.S. 17:5002(I) and 5024(A)(1)(e) and (B)(1)(e) and (3))