

Regular Session, 2014

SENATE BILL NO. 126

BY SENATOR NEVERS

TOPS. Provides relative to TOPS-Tech Early Start award. (gov sig)

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AN ACT

To amend and reenact R.S. 17:3048.5(B)(1), (D), (F) and (G), relative to the TOPS-Tech Early Start Award; to provide for purpose; to provide for eligibility; to provide for reporting; and to provide for related matters.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

Section 1. R.S. 17:3048.5(B)(1), (D), (F) and (G) are hereby amended and reenacted to read as follows:

§3048.5. TOPS-Tech Early Start Award; purpose; eligibility; award amounts limitations; administration; implementation; reports

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B.(1) A TOPS-Tech Early Start Award may be used **to fund any technical or applied course leading to an Industry Based Certification, a Certificate of Applied Sciences, and a Certificate of Technical Sciences** at a Louisiana public postsecondary education institution ~~for the purpose of pursuing an industry-based occupational or vocational education credential as defined by the Board of Regents when such credential also meets all of the following conditions~~ **certification or certificate is approved by the Workforce Investment Council as meeting the**

1           **following requirements:**

2                       (a) Is identified by the Occupation Forecasting Conference as a credential for  
3                       an occupation in top demand in Louisiana.

4                       (b) Is recognized by the State Industry-Based Certification Council  
5                       **Leadership Council.**

6                       ~~(c) Is approved by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education~~  
7                       ~~and by the Board of Supervisors of Community and Technical Colleges.~~

8   \*       \*       \*

9                       D. To be eligible for an initial TOPS-Tech Early Start Award, a student shall  
10                      meet each of the following conditions and comply with other applicable provisions  
11                      of this Section and administering agency rules:

12                      (1) Be in the eleventh or twelfth grade in a Louisiana public school.

13                      (2) Have prepared a five-year education and career plan, including a sequence  
14                      of related courses with a career focus as provided by Subpart A-1 of Part III of  
15                      Chapter 1 of this Title.

16                      (3) Have a cumulative high school grade point average on all courses  
17                      attempted of not less than 2.0 when calculated on a 4.0 scale.

18                      ~~(4) Have at least the minimum scores required to pass the mathematics and~~  
19                      ~~English portions of the graduation exit exam established by the State Board of~~  
20                      ~~Elementary and Secondary Education.~~

21                      ~~(5)~~ Score at least fifteen on the English subsection and fifteen on the  
22                      mathematics subsection of the ACT PLAN assessment administered as part of  
23                      Louisiana's Educational Planning and Assessment System.

24   \*       \*       \*

25                      F.(1) The provisions of this Section shall be administered by the Louisiana  
26                      Student Financial Assistance Commission, herein referred to as the "administering  
27                      agency". Except as otherwise provided by this Section, the authority granted to and  
28                      limitations placed on the administering agency by R.S. 17:3048.1 relative to  
29                      administering other awards pursuant to the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students

1 shall be deemed to apply also to the administration of the TOPS-Tech Early Start  
2 Award.

3 (2) The agency shall adopt, in accordance with the Administrative Procedure  
4 Act, rules to implement and administer the provisions of this Section. Such rules  
5 shall include but not be limited to necessary guidelines, policies, procedures, forms,  
6 and time lines.

7 ~~(3) The administering agency, in accordance with a plan approved by the~~  
8 ~~Board of Regents, may implement the provisions of this Section initially on a pilot~~  
9 ~~basis. However, if implemented on a pilot basis, it is the intention of the legislature~~  
10 ~~that full implementation be achieved at the earliest time possible.~~

11 G. Prior to the convening of each regular legislative session, ~~the Board of~~  
12 ~~Regents, in consultation with~~ the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance  
13 Commission; shall provide to the governor, the House Committee on Education, and  
14 the Senate Committee on Education a written review and analysis of TOPS-Tech  
15 Early Start awards relative to award use by students and the benefits therefrom as  
16 well as the impact on subsequent use by students of TOPS-Tech awards.

17 Section 2. This Act shall become effective upon signature by the governor or, if not  
18 signed by the governor, upon expiration of the time for bills to become law without signature  
19 by the governor, as provided by Article III, Section 18 of the Constitution of Louisiana. If  
20 vetoed by the governor and subsequently approved by the legislature, this Act shall become  
21 effective on the day following such approval.

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The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part  
of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Alan Miller.

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#### DIGEST

Nevers (SB 126)

Present law provides that a TOPS-Tech Early Start Award may be used at a Louisiana public postsecondary education institution for the purpose of pursuing an industry-based occupational or vocational education credential as defined by the Board of Regents when such credential also meets all of the following conditions:

- (1) Is identified by the Occupation Forecasting Conference as a credential for an occupation in top demand in Louisiana.
- (2) Is recognized by the State Industry-Based Certification Council.

- (3) Is approved by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and by the Board of Supervisors of Community and Technical Colleges.

Proposed law expands the use of the award so that it may be used to fund any technical or applied course leading to an Industry Based Certification, a Certificate of Applied Sciences, and a Certificate of Technical Sciences at a Louisiana public postsecondary education institution when such certification or certificate is approved by the Workforce Investment Council as meeting the following requirements:

- (1) Is identified by the Occupation Forecasting Conference as a credential for an occupation in top demand in Louisiana.
- (2) Is recognized by the State Industry-Based Certification Council Leadership Council.

Proposed law eliminates the requirement that credentials be approved by BESE and by the Board of Supervisors of Community and Technical Colleges.

Present law authorizes the administering agency, in accordance with a plan approved by the Board of Regents, to implement the provisions of present law initially on a pilot basis. However, if implemented on a pilot basis, it is the intention of the legislature that full implementation be achieved at the earliest time possible.

Proposed law repeals present law.

Present law provides that in order to be eligible for an initial TOPS-Tech Early Start Award, a student shall meet each of the following conditions and comply with other applicable provisions of present law and administering agency rules:

- (1) Be in the eleventh or twelfth grade in a Louisiana public school.
- (2) Have prepared a five-year education and career plan, including a sequence of related courses with a career focus as provided by present law.
- (3) Have a cumulative high school grade point average on all courses attempted of not less than 2.0 when calculated on a 4.0 scale.
- (4) Have at least the minimum scores required to pass the mathematics and English portions of the graduation exit exam established by BESE.
- (5) Score at least 15 on the English subsection and 15 on the mathematics subsection of the ACT PLAN assessment administered as part of Louisiana's Educational Planning and Assessment System.

Proposed law eliminates the requirement that the student must have at least the minimum scores required to pass the mathematics and English portions of the graduation exit exam established by BESE.

Present law provides that prior to the convening of each regular legislative session, the Board of Regents, in consultation with the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission (LASFAC), shall provide to the governor, the House Committee on Education, and the Senate Committee on Education a written review and analysis of TOPS-Tech Early Start awards relative to award use by students and the benefits therefrom as well as the impact on subsequent use by students of TOPS-Tech awards.

Proposed law requires that LASFAC, rather than the Board of Regents, issue the report currently required by present law.

Effective upon signature of the governor or lapse of time for gubernatorial action.

(Amends R.S. 17:3048.5(B)(1), (D), (F) and (G))