

2015 Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 675

BY REPRESENTATIVE KLECKLEY

Prefiled pursuant to Article III, Section 2(A)(4)(b)(i) of the Constitution of Louisiana.

STUDENT/LOANS-SCHOLARSHIP: Provides relative to the minimum ACT score for TOPS eligibility and caps TOPS award amounts

1 AN ACT

2 To amend and reenact R.S. 17:3048.1(A)(1)(b)(i) and to enact R.S. 17:3048.1(Z), relative  
3 to the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students; to provide relative to the minimum  
4 American College Test score required for eligibility for the Opportunity award; to  
5 provide with respect to the monetary amounts for awards granted pursuant to the  
6 program; to provide relative to future increases in award amounts; to provide for  
7 effectiveness; and to provide for related matters.

8 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

9 Section 1. R.S. 17:3048.1(A)(1)(b)(i) is hereby amended and reenacted and R.S.  
10 17:3048.1(Z) is hereby enacted to read as follows:

11 §3048.1. Program awards; eligibility; amounts; limitations; funding; administration

12 A.(1) As part of the Louisiana Taylor Opportunity Program for Students, the  
13 state shall financially assist any student who enrolls on a full-time basis in a public  
14 college or university in this state or a regionally accredited independent college or  
15 university in the state that is a member of the Louisiana Association of Independent  
16 Colleges and Universities, hereafter in this Chapter referred to collectively as  
17 "eligible colleges or universities", to pursue an academic undergraduate degree or,  
18 as provided by this Subsection, skill or occupational training as defined by the  
19 administering agency including a vocational or technical education certificate or  
20 diploma program or a nonacademic undergraduate degree, and who meets the  
21 qualifications of Subparagraph (b), (c), or (d) of this Paragraph and all of the  
22 applicable following qualifications:

23 \* \* \*

1 (b)(i) Has been certified as provided in Subsection D of this Section to have  
2 graduated from a public high school or a nonpublic high school which has been  
3 approved by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, has a  
4 minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.50 calculated on a 4.00 scale, has a  
5 composite score on the 1990 version of the American College Test which is at least  
6 equal to or higher than the state's average composite score, ~~rounded to the nearest~~  
7 ~~whole number, expressed in whole number increments,~~ reported for the prior year,  
8 but never less than twenty, or an equivalent concordant value on an enhanced or  
9 revised version of such test or on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, and, unless granted  
10 an exception for cause by the administering agency, has enrolled in an eligible  
11 college or university as a first-time freshman not later than the semester, excluding  
12 summer semesters or sessions, immediately following the first anniversary of the  
13 date that the student graduated from high school or, if the student joins the United  
14 States Armed Forces within one year after graduating from high school, has enrolled  
15 in an eligible college or university as a first-time freshman not later than the  
16 semester, excluding summer semesters or sessions, immediately following the fifth  
17 anniversary of the date that the student graduated from high school; however,  
18 effective for the 1996-1997 school year and thereafter, if, on or prior to the fifth  
19 anniversary of the date that the student graduated from high school, the student  
20 reenlists in the United States Armed Forces and maintains continuous active duty,  
21 the five-year period shall be extended to the semester immediately following the  
22 one-year anniversary of the student's separation from active duty service. As  
23 distinguished from all other students qualifying for this program, a student who  
24 meets the requirements of this Subparagraph shall be the recipient of an  
25 "Opportunity Award" for the purposes of this program.

\* \* \*

27 Z.(1) Notwithstanding any provision of this Chapter to the contrary,  
28 beginning with the 2016-2017 award year, the amount awarded by the state to a

1 student who is the recipient of any award granted pursuant to this Chapter shall be  
2 equal to the award amount paid for the 2015-2016 award year.

3 (2)(a) Beginning with the 2016-2017 award year, the legislature may, by  
4 law, increase the amount awarded by the state in any given award year to a student  
5 who is the recipient of any award granted pursuant to this Chapter.

6 (b) Any increase in award amounts granted by the legislature pursuant to this  
7 Paragraph shall be established as the minimum amount to be awarded to a student  
8 who is the recipient of any award granted pursuant to this Chapter.

9 (c) In no case shall the amount awarded to a student who is the recipient of  
10 any award pursuant to this Chapter be less than the amount paid for the previous  
11 award year.

12 (3) The award amounts as provided in this Subsection shall be exclusive of  
13 any additional amounts awarded to students who receive a Performance Award or  
14 an Honors Award.

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

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#### DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

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HB 675 Original

2015 Regular Session

Kleckley

**Abstract:** Fixes TOPS award amounts at the 2015-2016 levels.

#### ACT Score Reporting

With respect to the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS), present law provides that a student, among other eligibility criteria, must have a composite ACT score equal to or higher than the state average composite score, rounded to the nearest whole number, reported for the previous year, but never less than 20 or an equivalent value on the SAT in order to receive a TOPS Opportunity award.

Proposed law retains the requirement that a student have a minimum ACT score equal to or greater than the state average, but never less than 20, but specifies that the state average be expressed in whole number increments rounded.

#### Establishment of Baseline Award Amounts

Present law provides as follows relative to the amount awarded to TOPS recipients of Opportunity, Performance, or Honors awards:

- (1) For a recipient who attends a La. public college or university to pursue an academic undergraduate degree or skill or occupational training, the award amount is an amount determined by the La. Student Financial Assistance Commission (LASFAC) to equal the tuition charged by the college or university attended.
- (2) For a recipient who attends an eligible state nonpublic college or university, the award amount is an amount determined by LASFAC to equal the weighted average amount of amounts paid for students attending public colleges and universities that offer academic undergraduate degrees at the baccalaureate level or an amount determined by LASFAC to equal the weighted average of amounts paid for students attending public colleges and universities who are enrolled in permitted skill or occupational training.
- (3) For a recipient who is eligible to use the award at an out-of-state nonpublic college or university to pursue an academic undergraduate degree, the award amount is an amount determined by LASFAC to equal the weighted average of amounts paid for students attending La. public colleges and universities that offer academic undergraduate degrees.
- (4) For a student who is the recipient of an Opportunity, Performance, or Honors award who enrolls in a cosmetology school registered by the La. State Board of Cosmetology or a proprietary school licensed by the Board of Regents, the award amount is equal to the amount determined by the LASFAC to equal the weighted average of amounts for students attending public colleges and universities who are enrolled in the permitted skill or occupational training.
- (5) Provides an additional \$200 per semester, or \$400 per academic year, to a recipient of a Performance Award, and provides an additional \$400 per semester, or \$800 per academic year, to a recipient of an Honors Award.

Relative to the amount of a TOPS-Tech Award, present law provides as follows:

- (1) For a recipient who attends an eligible La. public college or university that does not offer an academic undergraduate degree at the baccalaureate level or higher to pursue permitted skill or occupational training, the award amount equals the actual cost of tuition.
- (2) For a recipient who attends any other eligible postsecondary education institution, the award amount equals the amount determined by LASFAC to equal the weighted average of amounts paid for students attending public institutions who are enrolled in the permitted skill or occupational training.

Proposed law provides that, beginning with the 2016-2017 award year, award amounts shall not increase.

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

(Amends R.S. 17:3048.1(A)(1)(b)(i), Adds R.S. 17:3048.1(Z))