

2020 Regular Session

SENATE BILL NO. 318

BY SENATOR CATHEY

TOPS. Provides for TOPS-Tech award eligibility for certain military veterans. (gov sig)

1 AN ACT

2 To enact R.S. 17:5029(E), relative to the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students; to
3 provide for eligibility for certain military veterans to receive a TOPS-Tech Award;
4 to provide relative to eligibility requirements; and to provide for related matters.

5 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

6 Section 1. R.S. 17:5029(E) is hereby enacted to read as follows:

7 §5029. Alternative initial eligibility requirements

8 * * *

9 **E.(1) Notwithstanding the initial eligibility requirements established by**
10 **this Chapter, effective for the 2020-2021, 2021-2022, and 2022-2023 academic**
11 **years, an individual who was honorably discharged from a branch of the United**
12 **States Armed Forces from a military installation in Louisiana shall be eligible**
13 **to receive a TOPS-Tech Award, provided he meets all of the following**
14 **requirements:**

15 **(a) Had at least three years of military service prior to discharge.**

16 **(b) Is a citizen of the United States.**

17 **(c) Established Louisiana residency within one year after discharge from**

1 military service, provided residency was established on or after January 1, 2020.

2 (d) Earned a 17 or higher score on the ACT or an equivalent concordant
 3 value on the SAT, or attained a silver level score or higher on the ACT
 4 WorkKeys system of assessments.

5 (e) Enrolls in an eligible college or university within one year after
 6 notification of eligibility for the award.

7 (2) An individual who is determined eligible for and receives a
 8 TOPS-Tech Award pursuant to this Subsection shall be subject to all other
 9 provisions of this Chapter relative to the award and the rules and regulations
 10 adopted by the administering agency.

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

The original instrument was prepared by Jeanne Johnston. The following digest, which does not constitute a part of the legislative instrument, was prepared by Martha Hess.

DIGEST

SB 318 Reengrossed

2020 Regular Session

Cathey

Present law provides for Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) as a program of merit scholarships for students attending certain postsecondary educational institutions who meet specific initial eligibility requirements pertaining to grade point average (GPA), ACT score, and core curriculum requirements and certain other qualifications. The initial award eligibility for a TOPS-Tech Award requires a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.5 on the core curriculum and a minimum ACT score of 17 or attainment of a silver level score on the ACT WorkKeys system of assessments. Present law further requires the recipient to be a La. resident and a U.S. citizen, and generally requires the student to enroll in an eligible postsecondary institution within one year of graduating from high school.

Proposed law provides for alternative initial eligibility requirements for veterans who were honorably discharged from the United States Armed Forces from a military installation in Louisiana as follows:

- (1) Had at least three years of military service prior to discharge.
- (2) Is a citizen of the United States.
- (3) Established Louisiana residency within one year after discharge from military service, provided residency is established on or after January 1, 2020.

- (4) Earned a 17 or higher score on the ACT or an equivalent concordant value on the SAT, or attained a silver level score or higher on the ACT WorkKeys system of assessments.
- (5) Enrolls in an eligible college or university within one year after notification of eligibility for the award.

Present law limits the duration of a student's tuition payment to two years for a TOPS-Tech Award. Requires that students meet certain requirements during these time frames in order to maintain continued eligibility. Such requirements include but are not limited to:

- (1) Making steady academic progress while earning enough credits to maintain full-time status.
- (2) Maintaining a minimum required grade point average, depending on the type of award received.
- (3) Having no criminal conviction, except for misdemeanor traffic violations.

Proposed law retains present law.

Proposed law applies to the 2020-2021, 2021-2022, and 2022-2023 academic years.

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

(Adds R.S. 17:5029(E))

Summary of Amendments Adopted by Senate

Committee Amendments Proposed by Senate Committee on Education to the original bill

- 1. Removes repayment provisions.

Summary of Amendments Adopted by Senate

Committee Amendments Proposed by Senate Committee on Finance to the engrossed bill

- 1. Makes effective only for the 2020-2021, 2021-2022, and 2022-2023 academic years.
- 2. Requires the individual to be honorably discharged from a military installation in Louisiana.
- 3. Requires residency to be established on or after January 1, 2020.