
DIGEST

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HB 279 Original

2016 Regular Session

Broadwater

Abstract: Provides for differential TOPS award amounts based on a student's classification level and requires that a percentage of generated savings be appropriated for the La. GO Grant program.

Present law provides for the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) as a program of merit scholarships for students attending certain postsecondary education institutions who meet specific initial eligibility requirements, including academic requirements pertaining to grade point average, ACT score, and core curricula. Provides for Opportunity, Performance, and Honors Awards and the TOPS-Tech Award and that award amounts vary depending on the award and the type of college or university in which a student enrolls.

Present law provides, relative to award amounts for Opportunity, Performance, or Honors Awards, that at a La. public institution, the award amount is equal to the tuition charged by the institution, and at a La. nonpublic institution, the award amount is equal to the weighted average of amounts paid for students attending La. institutions that offer academic undergraduate degrees at the baccalaureate level.

Proposed law retains present law for students graduating from high school prior to the 2019-2020 school year, but, applicable to students graduating during or after that school year, provides differential award amounts for freshmen and sophomores, as follows:

- (1) For freshmen, 80% of present law award amount.
- (2) For sophomores, 90% of present law award amount.

Present law provides, relative to TOPS-Tech Award amounts, that at a public institution that does not offer an academic undergraduate degree at the baccalaureate level, the amount is equal to the tuition charged by the institution. For other eligible institutions, the amount is equal to the weighted average of amounts paid to students attending an eligible public institution that does not offer an academic undergraduate degree at the baccalaureate level.

Proposed law retains present law for students graduating from high school prior to the 2019-2020 school year, but, applicable to students graduating during or after that school year, provides differential award amounts for students who have completed fewer than 24 credit hours, as follows:

- (1) For students who have completed fewer than 12 credit hours, 80% of present law award

amount.

- (2) For students who have completed at least 12 but fewer than 24 credit hours, 90% of present law award amount.

Proposed law, notwithstanding the differential award amounts provided in proposed law, grants freshman and sophomore recipients of Opportunity, Performance, or Honors Awards and TOPS-Tech recipients who have completed fewer than 24 hours the option of deferring receipt of their awards. If such a student maintains TOPS eligibility, the award amount shall be paid to him at the end of the award year, and the award amount shall be as follows:

- (1) If he maintains a 3.00 GPA, the amount shall be as otherwise provided in present law.
- (2) If he fails to maintain a 3.00 GPA, the amount shall be the percentage based on his classification as provided in proposed law.

Proposed law further requires, beginning with the 2019-2020 fiscal year, the legislature to appropriate 25% of any savings attributable to proposed law implementation for the purpose of increasing funding for the La. GO Grant program. Requires, beginning in 2019, the Legislative Fiscal Office annually to issue a fiscal and economic impact statement on Dec. 1st documenting the projected savings for the ensuing fiscal year. Requires the Legislative Fiscal Officer to forward this annual statement to the commissioner of administration for use in developing the budgets for TOPS and the La. GO Grant program. Provides that the monies appropriated for the La. GO Grant program pursuant to proposed law shall not displace, replace, or supplant the average amount of the monies appropriated for the program for the three most recent fiscal years.

(Amends R.S. 17:5002(B) and (D)(1)(intro. para.) and (2); Adds R.S. 17:5002.1)