
DIGEST

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HB 852 Original

2016 Regular Session

Hunter

Abstract: Requires the recipient of TOPS awards to pursue a field of study that will qualify him for employment in certain categories of jobs and to repay awards unless he completes a bachelor's or postgraduate degree and resides in La. for at least one year for each year of award received; adjusts requirements for maintaining eligibility.

Taylor Opportunity Program Award for Students (TOPS), generally

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 grade point average, ACT score, and core curriculum requirements and certain other qualifications. Provides for Opportunity, Performance and Honors Awards (eight semesters) and TOPS-Tech Awards (two years).

Maintaining eligibility

Present law provides academic and other requirements for maintaining eligibility for awards once enrolled in college. Proposed law applicable to students graduating from high school during or after the 2016-2017 school year, adds a requirement that the student be pursuing a degree or skill or occupational training that would qualify him for employment in a four or five star job, on a statewide basis, as defined by the La. Workforce Commission. Further provides that a student shall remain eligible for an award if he otherwise maintains eligibility and if after the student enrolls in but before he completes the program of study such job is no longer defined as a four or five star job.

TOPS-Tech Award

Present law, applicable to students graduating from high school during or after the 2016-2017 school year, provides that a TOPS-Tech Award shall only be awarded if a student is enrolled in a program aligned to state workforce priorities as determined by the Bd. of Regents and La. Workforce Investment Council. Proposed law, applicable to this same cohort of students, provides that this award only be awarded if a student is enrolled in a program that would qualify him for employment in a four or five star job, on a statewide basis, as defined by the La. Workforce Commission.

Repayment

Proposed law, applicable to students graduating from high school during or after the 2016-2017 school year, requires any student who fails to maintain award eligibility or to complete his academic

degree or skill or occupational training within the time frames specified in present law to repay all award amounts paid to a postsecondary education on his behalf. Requires the administering agency (the La. Student Financial Assistance Commission) to promulgate rules necessary to implement proposed law, including provision for the following:

- (1) Collecting amounts owed and interest on unpaid amounts.
- (2) Circumstances under which a student shall be excepted from the proposed law repayment requirements; requires that these rules provide for the definition, certification requirements, and maximum duration of these circumstances, which shall be limited to permanent disability and military service.

(Amends R.S. 17:5002(D)(1); Adds 17:5004, 5004.1, 5041(6), 5041.1, 5042(5), and 5042.1)