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1 HB377
2 I3J51ZW-1
3 By Representatives Holk-Jones, Robertson, Rehm, Brown, Smith,
4 Paschal, Oliver, Lipscomb, Harrison, Pettus, Underwood,
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6 (P), Marques, Reynolds
7 RFD: Ways and Means Education
8 First Read: 03-Feb-26



SYNOPSIS:

Under the Alabama G.I. and Dependents' Educational Benefit Act, educational benefits for up to the undergraduate course level are available to eligible children, spouses, and widows of deceased or disabled veterans, veterans who are listed as missing in action, and veterans who were prisoners of war while serving in the United States Armed Forces.

This bill would expand these educational benefits to include graduate courses in a medical field.

This bill would limit the tuition that may be charged.

This bill would also make nonsubstantive, technical revisions to update the existing code language to current style.

A BILL
TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

Relating to Alabama G.I. and Dependents' Educational Benefit Act; to amend Sections 31-6-2, 31-6-4, 31-6-5, and 31-6-6, Code of Alabama 1975, to expand educational benefits



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for eligible children, spouses, and widows of certain veterans to include graduate courses in a medical field; to limit tuition that may be charged; and to make nonsubstantive, technical revisions to update the existing code language to current style.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. Sections 31-6-2, 31-6-4, 31-6-5, and 31-6-6, Code of Alabama 1975, are amended to read as follows:

"§31-6-2

For the purposes of this chapter, the following terms have the following meanings ~~ascribed to them by this section~~:

(1) ARMED FORCES. Includes the United States Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, Space Force, and Coast Guard.

(2) COMPREHENSIVE TRANSITION AND POSTSECONDARY PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES. Has the same meaning as in 20 U.S.C. § 1140.

(3) MEDICAL FIELD. Includes any professional physical health care program, professional mental health care program, allied health care program, and health care administration program.

~~(3)~~ (4) QUALIFYING PRIVATE SCHOOL. Any regionally accredited private two-year or four-year institution of higher education physically located in the state that receives a direct appropriation from the state or whose resident students may receive appropriations from the state through the Alabama Student Grant Program.

~~(4)~~ (5) QUALIFYING SCHOOL. An institution that is either a qualifying state school or a qualifying private school ~~as~~



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~~defined by this chapter.~~

~~(5)~~ (6) QUALIFYING STATE SCHOOL. An Alabama public two-year or four-year institution of higher education.

~~(6)~~ (7) SPOUSE. Husband or wife.

~~(7)~~ (8) TUITION. Fees for instruction.

~~(8)~~ (9) TUITION AND FEES. All fees known and classed as instructional fees.

~~(9)~~ (10) WIDOW. An individual whose spouse is deceased and who has not remarried."

"§31-6-4

(a) (1) Any child whose father or mother meets any of the following criteria may attend any qualifying school for a period of five standard academic years, not to exceed 45 months or the equivalent of 45 months if enrolled part-time, pursuant to the tuition reimbursement guidelines as provided in subsection ~~(e)~~ (d):

a. Was killed or died in line of duty or is listed as missing in action or is or was a prisoner of war or whose death or permanent total disabilities were service-connected while serving as a member of the armed forces~~+~~.

b. Died from a disability incurred from military service, as established by the State Department of ~~Veterans~~ Veterans Affairs, after having been discharged under conditions other than dishonorable and after having served at least 90 days consecutively in the armed forces~~prior to and/or subsequent to the date on which the disability occurred~~, or who was honorably discharged by reason of a qualifying service-connected disability after serving less



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than 90 days~~+~~.

c. Was killed or died while on state active duty status as defined in Section 31-12-1, or whose death results proximately and within three years from an injury received while on state active duty status~~+~~~~or~~.

d. Has been assigned a 100 percent permanent or total disability~~rated~~ rating by the United States~~Veterans'~~ ~~Administration~~ Department of Veterans Affairs, or was discharged or retired from the armed forces with a 40 percent or more disability and maintained that percentage.

(2) Training under this section must be initiated prior to the child's thirtieth birthday, and must be completed within eight years after its initiation, except for delays caused by military service during the training period, and in no case may training be received under this chapter beyond the thirty-eighth birthday of the child.

(b) For children applying for benefits for the first time beginning with the fall term of the 2014-2015 academic year, and thereafter, the total value of tuition charged may not exceed the in-state tuition rate of the qualifying school attended.

~~(b)~~ (c) (1) The educational benefits provided by this section to children making application for benefits for the first time beginning with the fall term of the 2014-2015 academic year, and thereafter, shall be limited to undergraduate courses of study~~only, and the value of tuition paid shall be limited to the in-state tuition rate of the qualifying school attended.~~



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(2) Notwithstanding subdivision (1), commencing July 31, 2026, the educational benefits shall include graduate courses of study in a medical field.

~~(e)~~ (d) For those first filing for benefits under this chapter on or after July 31, 2017, and for those attending a qualifying private school, the educational benefit shall be for tuition reimbursement and books and fees reimbursement. The value of tuition paid per semester hour ~~(, or equivalent),~~ shall be limited to four hundred dollars (\$400). The value of the books and fees paid per semester shall be limited to one thousand dollars (\$1,000) per student.

~~(d)~~ (e) For the purpose of the minimum disability requirement provided for in ~~subdivision (a)(4)~~ paragraph (a)(1)d., the dependent of any veteran whose disability rating as of July 31, 2017, is at least 20 percent but less than 40 percent shall qualify for the benefits of this chapter, provided that the dependent shall file an application for the benefits before July 31, 2023, and the dependent is reasonably expected to be eligible to attend a qualifying school in the next academic year."

"§31-6-5

(a)(1) Any spouse or widow whose spouse, during their marriage, meets any of the following criteria shall be entitled to training in any qualifying school for a period of five standard academic years, not to exceed 45 months, or to training for the equivalent of 45 months if enrolled part-time, pursuant to the tuition reimbursement guidelines as provided in subsection ~~(e)~~ (d):



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a. Was killed or died in the line of duty or is listed as missing in action or is or was a prisoner of war while serving as a member of the armed forces~~†~~.

b. Died from a disability incurred from military service~~†~~.

c. Was killed or died while on state active duty status as defined in Section 31-12-1, or whose death results proximately and within three years from an injury sustained while on state active duty status~~†~~~~or~~.

d. Is 100 percent permanently and totally disabled, whose permanent and total disabilities were service-connected.

(2) One change of program shall be allowed without counseling. All training received under this section~~must~~ shall be completed within eight years after its initiation.

(b) This section shall not apply to the spouse of any deceased serviceman or veteran who has remarried prior to applying for and obtaining educational benefits under this section~~, and should~~. If any spouse of the deceased serviceman or veteran~~remarry~~ remarries during the time he or she is in attendance upon any of the qualifying schools mentioned in this section, ~~then~~ he or she shall pay tuition and fees for the course of study or attendance upon the qualifying school from the time of the remarriage.

(c) For spouses and widows applying for benefits for the first time beginning with the fall term of the 2014-2015 academic year, and thereafter, the total value of tuition charged may not exceed the in-state tuition rate of the qualifying school attended.



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~~(b)~~ (d) (1) The educational benefits provided by this section to spouses and widows making application for benefits for the first time beginning with the fall term of the 2014-2015 academic year, and thereafter, shall be limited to undergraduate courses of study only, ~~and the value of tuition paid shall be limited to the in-state tuition rate of the qualifying school attended.~~

(2) Notwithstanding subdivision (1), commencing July 31, 2026, the educational benefits shall include graduate courses of study in a medical field.

~~(e)~~ (e) For those first filing for benefits under this chapter on or after July 31, 2017, and for those attending a qualifying private school, the educational benefit shall be for tuition reimbursement and books and fees reimbursement. The value of tuition paid per semester hour ~~(, or equivalent),~~ shall be limited to four hundred dollars (\$400). The value of the books and fees paid per semester shall be limited to one thousand dollars (\$1,000) per student."

"§31-6-6

(a) The spouse and children of any veteran who is suffering from 40 to 90 percent service-connected disability brought about from service in the Armed Forces of the United States, or the widow and children of a deceased veteran who was suffering from 40 percent or more of service-connected disability at the time of death, as established by the State Department of ~~Veterans'~~ Veterans Affairs, shall be entitled to the following educational advantages and opportunities:

(1) The spouse or widow shall be entitled to up to 27



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months of schooling, or the equivalent of 27 months if enrolled part-time, in any qualifying school, pursuant to the tuition reimbursement guidelines as provided in subsection ~~(d)~~ (e). One change of program shall be allowed without counseling. All training received at qualifying schools under this subdivision must be completed within a period of six years after its initiation.

(2) Each child of a disabled veteran shall be entitled to five standard academic years, or the equivalent of 45 months if enrolled part-time, in any qualifying school pursuant to the tuition reimbursement guidelines as provided in subsection ~~(d)~~ (e). One change of program shall be allowed without counseling. Training under this subdivision ~~must~~ shall be initiated prior to the child's twenty-sixth birthday, and ~~must~~ shall be completed within eight years after its initiation, except for delays caused by military service during the training period, and in no case may training be received under this section beyond the thirty-fourth birthday of the child.

(b) For the purpose of the minimum disability requirement provided for in subsection (a), the dependent of any veteran whose disability rating as of July 31, 2017, is at least 20 percent but less than 40 percent shall qualify for the benefits of this chapter, provided that the dependent shall file application for benefits before July 31, 2023, and the dependent is reasonably expected to be eligible to attend a qualifying school in the next academic year.

(c) For spouses, children, and widows applying for



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benefits for the first time beginning with the fall term of the 2014-2015 academic year, and thereafter, the total value of tuition charged may not exceed the in-state tuition rate of the qualifying school attended.

~~(e)~~ (d) (1) The educational benefits provided by this section to spouses, children, and widows making application for benefits for the first time beginning with the fall term of the 2014-2015 academic year, and thereafter, shall be limited to undergraduate courses of study ~~only, and the value of tuition paid shall be limited to the in-state tuition rate of the qualifying school attended.~~

(2) Notwithstanding subdivision (1), commencing July 31, 2026, the educational benefits shall include graduate courses of study in a medical field.

~~(d)~~ (e) For those first filing for benefits under this chapter on or after July 31, 2017, and for those attending a qualifying private school, the educational benefit shall be for tuition reimbursement and books and fees reimbursement. The value of tuition paid per semester hour ~~(, or equivalent),~~ shall be limited to four hundred dollars (\$400). The value of the books and fees paid per semester shall be limited to one thousand dollars (\$1,000) per student."

Section 2. This act shall become effective on January 1, 2028.