

**SB224 INTRODUCED**



1 SB224

2 2JG6RSI-1

3 By Senators Jones, Butler, Allen, Sessions, Bell, Kelley,  
4 Shelnutt, Stutts, Elliott, Roberts, Barfoot, Waggoner,  
5 Carnley, Price, Chesteen

6 RFD: Finance and Taxation Education

7 First Read: 29-Jan-26



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4 SYNOPSIS:

5                   Under current law, the Alabama G.I. Dependent  
6                   Scholarship Program provides scholarships to eligible  
7                   dependents of disabled and deceased veterans that meet  
8                   certain residency and disability requirements.

9                   This bill would reduce the minimum disability  
10                  rating for participation in the program for a disabled  
11                  veteran to 30 percent.

12                  This bill would also establish a pilot program  
13                  to allow a certain number of dependents of eligible  
14                  veterans to participate in the scholarship  
15                  program.

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18                   A BILL

19                   TO BE ENTITLED

20                   AN ACT

21

22                  Related to the Alabama G.I. Dependent Scholarship  
23                  Program; to amend Sections 31-6-4, 31-6-6, and 31-6-9, Code of  
24                  Alabama 1975; to reduce the minimum disability rating required  
25                  for participation in the program; and to establish a pilot  
26                  program to admit additional dependents of certain disabled  
27                  veterans into the scholarship program.

28                  BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

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29                   Section 1. Sections 31-6-4, 31-6-6, and 31-6-9, Code of  
30                   Alabama 1975, are amended to read as follows:

31                   "§31-6-4

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

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

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

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

55                   d. Has been assigned 100 percent permanent or total  
56                   disability rated by the United States ~~Veterans'~~



57     AdministrationDepartment of Veterans Affairs, or was  
58     discharged or retired from the ~~armed forces~~Armed Forces with a  
59     4030 percent or more disability and maintained that  
60     percentage.

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

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

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

81                 ~~(d) For the purpose of the minimum disability  
82     requirement provided for in subdivision (a) (4), the dependent  
83     of any veteran whose disability rating as of July 31, 2017, is  
84     at least 20 percent but less than 40 percent shall qualify for~~



85 ~~the benefits of this chapter, provided that the dependent~~  
86 ~~shall file application for the benefits before July 31, 2023,~~  
87 ~~and the dependent is reasonably expected to be eligible to~~  
88 ~~attend a qualifying school in the next academic year."~~

89 "§31-6-6

90 (a) The spouse and children of any veteran who is  
91 suffering from ~~40~~30 to 90 percent service-connected disability  
92 brought about from service in the Armed Forces of the United  
93 States, or the widow and children of a deceased veteran who  
94 was suffering from ~~40~~30 percent or more of service-connected  
95 disability at the time of death, as established by the State  
96 Department of ~~Veterans'~~Veterans Affairs, shall be entitled to  
97 the following educational advantages and opportunities:

98 (1) The spouse or widow shall be entitled to up to 27  
99 months of schooling, or the equivalent of 27 months if  
100 enrolled part-time, in any qualifying school, pursuant to the  
101 tuition reimbursement guidelines as provided in subsection  
102 ~~(d)~~(c). One change of program shall be allowed without  
103 counseling. All training received at qualifying schools under  
104 this subdivision must be completed within a period of six  
105 years after its initiation.

106 (2) Each child of a disabled veteran shall be entitled  
107 to five standard academic years, or the equivalent of 45  
108 months if enrolled part-time, in any qualifying school  
109 pursuant to the tuition reimbursement guidelines as provided  
110 in subsection ~~(d)~~(c). One change of program shall be allowed  
111 without counseling. Training under this subdivision must be  
112 initiated prior to the child's twenty-sixth birthday, and must



113 be completed within eight years after its initiation, except  
114 for delays caused by military service during the training  
115 period, and in no case may training be received under this  
116 section beyond the thirty-fourth birthday of the child.

117 ~~(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.~~

125 ~~(c)~~ (b) 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.

132 ~~(d)~~ (c) 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~~, 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."



141 "§31-6-9

142 (a) For those dependents who first file for benefits  
143 under this chapter prior to July 31, 2017, the benefits  
144 provided under this chapter shall be in addition to any other  
145 state or federal benefits to which that dependent may be  
146 entitled.

147 (b) For dependents who first file for benefits under  
148 this chapter on or after July 31, 2017, and for those  
149 attending a qualifying private school:

150 (1) To the extent permitted by law, prior to applying  
151 any benefits provided for under this chapter, institutional  
152 certifying officials and financial aid officials shall first  
153 apply other federal, state, institutional, and ~~third~~  
154 party~~third-party~~ scholarships and grants awarded to the  
155 dependent for that academic period for payment of required  
156 educational expenses during an academic period~~-i~~

157 (2) A completed Free Application for Federal Student  
158 Aid (FAFSA), or the equivalent, must be submitted to the  
159 United States Department of Education for each year in which  
160 the dependent receives benefits under this chapter. The  
161 dependent shall have applied for all federal student financial  
162 aid grants, including, but not limited to, Pell Grants,  
163 Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants, and Education and  
164 Training Vouchers, identified as being available for the  
165 student's application by Federal Student Aid, an office of the  
166 United States Department of Education, or its successor  
167 agency~~-i~~

168 (3) All students receiving educational benefits under



169 this chapter and the qualifying schools they attend must  
170 comply with the standards of Satisfactory Academic Progress  
171 (SAP) as required for Title IV benefits under the Higher  
172 Education Act and as defined by that qualifying school. Those  
173 students who would no longer be eligible to receive Title IV  
174 benefits due to a failure to meet SAP standards shall no  
175 longer be eligible to receive benefits under this chapter.  
176 Each qualifying school shall notify the State Department of  
177 ~~Veterans'~~Veterans Affairs of any student who currently holds a  
178 certificate of eligibility for benefits under this chapter who  
179 is no longer eligible to receive benefits due to a failure to  
180 meet SAP standards and the effective date of that change in  
181 eligibility~~;~~ and

182 (4) The dependent shall ensure that all qualifying  
183 schools he or she attends under this program are authorized to  
184 release the personally identifiable information to the State  
185 Department of ~~Veterans'~~Veterans Affairs as is required for the  
186 determination of that dependent's continued eligibility and as  
187 required for the completion of all reports required by law.

188 (c) Any dependent who receives benefits under this  
189 chapter, and whose benefit period is interrupted due to  
190 accident, injury, or illness, shall have the benefit time  
191 period which is lost due to the accident, illness, or injury  
192 restored to him or her.

193 (d) Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter  
194 to the contrary, dependents of any veteran whose disability  
195 rating, if any, prior to May 23, 2017, was less than 20  
196 percent, but who had a claim for compensation pending prior to



197 that date which resulted in a final award by the United States  
198 Department of Veterans Affairs of at least 20 percent, shall  
199 be eligible for education benefits as the chapter read prior  
200 to May 23, 2017, if the dependent files an application for  
201 benefits under this chapter within six months of that final  
202 adjudication and provides proof satisfactory to the State  
203 Department of ~~Veterans'~~Veterans Affairs that he or she  
204 qualifies under this exception and currently satisfies the  
205 eligibility requirements as the chapter read prior to May 23,  
206 2017."

207         Section 2. (a) Notwithstanding provisions of Section  
208 31-6-11, Code of Alabama 1975, to the contrary, beginning on  
209 January 1, 2027, dependents who would be eligible to receive  
210 benefits under this chapter but for their inability to show  
211 the qualifying veteran was a permanent resident of the State  
212 of Alabama for at least one year immediately prior to his or  
213 her entrance into service may be eligible to receive  
214 educational benefits under this chapter where they can show  
215 the qualifying veteran:

216             (1) Has, or had at the time of his or her death, a  
217 minimum disability rating of 50 percent; and

218             (2) Has been a permanent resident of this state for at  
219 least five years immediately prior to the filing of the  
220 application for benefits under this section or immediately  
221 prior to his or her death if the veteran is deceased.

222             (b) The educational benefits provided by this section  
223 shall be provided to not more than 100 dependents annually.  
224 Priority of dependents accepted shall be based on the highest

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225 disability rating of the qualifying veterans.

226 (c) The benefits provided by this section shall be the  
227 same as benefits provided for dependents as described in  
228 Chapter 6, Title 31, Code of Alabama 1975.

229 (d) The educational benefits authorized pursuant to  
230 this section shall expire on December 31, 2028, unless  
231 extended by an act of the Legislature.

232 Section 3. This act shall become effective on June 1,  
2026.