

SB 234 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

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Meeting Dates: 5/14

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Removes exclusion of students receiving federal vocational rehabilitation education benefits from section providing for resident rate tuition at public universities and community colleges for students who served in, or are dependents of someone who served in, the Armed Forces or international position.

Senate floor vote: 26-0

No fiscal impact

No revenue impact

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

A number of higher education benefits are available to qualifying active duty service members, veterans, and their dependents in Oregon. The federal government provides tuition assistance through the G.I. Bill and vocational rehabilitation benefits. Educational assistance is also available for Oregon residents who served in the National Guard or Reserves in an active duty capacity in a combat zone since September 11, 2001, through the Voyager Tuition Assistance Program. Priority enrollment is available at Oregon institutions of higher education for eligible service members, veterans, and their dependents. Oregon community colleges and universities also provide in-state tuition for eligible veterans at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. Finally, tuition waivers are available for eligible children and spouses to pursue a bachelor's or master's degree for only the cost of fees, pursuant to the Veterans Dependent Tuition Waiver Program. These waivers are available to the dependents of Purple Heart recipients awarded from 2001 going forward; or of veterans who died in active duty or from a disability sustained in active duty; or of veterans who are 100 percent disabled from military service.

Although Oregon provides in-state tuition for eligible veterans, a conflicting provision exists in current state law that specifically requires recipients of vocational rehabilitation benefits to pay full nonresident tuition. This provision causes some institutions of higher education to differentiate between student veterans: those that receive tuition assistance via the G.I. Bill pay in-state rates, and those who receive tuition assistance through vocational rehabilitation benefits pay nonresident rates.

Senate Bill 234-A allows nonresident student veterans paying tuition with federal vocational rehabilitation benefits, to be charged in-state rates.