

HCS HB 957 -- WAR ON TERROR VETERAN SURVIVOR GRANTS

SPONSOR: Shoemaker, 8 (Cunningham, 145)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on Homeland Security and Veterans Affairs by a vote of 16 to 0.

This substitute creates a grant program for survivors of Missouri veterans who died in, or as a result of, the war on terror in Afghanistan and Iraq. Up to 25 grants may be given annually, with the option to petition the General Assembly for more grants if the waiting list exceeds 50. The grants may be used for educational programs at public postsecondary institutions that lead to a certificate, associate, or first bachelor's degree. The amount of each grant cannot exceed 100% of the tuition and the cost of books, when combined with other aid. The Coordinating Board for Higher Education will administer the program. Survivors will be certified as eligible by a state veterans service officer or a Veterans Administration medical authority, depending on the circumstances of the veteran's death.

The program requires that surviving children be permitted to apply for full benefits until they reach 25 years of age. Surviving spouses will also be permitted to apply for full benefits until they reach 45 years of age.

The provisions of the substitute will expire six years from the effective date.

FISCAL NOTE: Estimated Cost on General Revenue Fund of \$0 to \$255,475 in FY 2005, \$0 to \$262,000 in FY 2006, and \$0 to \$268,850 in FY 2007. Subject to appropriation. No impact on Other State Funds in FY 2005, FY 2006, and FY 2007.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the bill will encourage enrollment in college by providing an educational grant for eligible recipients pursuing a certificate or an associate or first baccalaureate degree at a public educational institution in Missouri. The completion of an educational program will help survivors enter or re-enter the labor market. The bill will limit the grant and funding received from additional sources from exceeding the total cost of tuition and books charged to an eligible recipient.

Testifying for the bill was Representative Cunningham (145).

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

Joseph Deering, Legislative Analyst