

HB 1723 -- HIGHER EDUCATION BENEFITS FOR VETERANS

SPONSOR: Grier

This bill replaces the Missouri Returning Heroes' Education Act with the Missouri Heroes' Education Act, which requires the governing board of each institution of higher education to exempt certain veterans and their family members from tuition, dues, fees and other required payments for up to 150 credit hours. The person seeking the exemption must currently reside in the state, or entered military service in the state, declared the state as home of record, or have been determined to be a resident of the state. The exemption also applies to the spouse and children of certain military personnel killed while in service, missing in action, or totally and permanently disabled.

Each institution granting an exemption must require an applicant to submit an application on a form and in a manner set by the Missouri Veterans Commission. A person entitled to receive benefits under federal legislation that is equal to or exceeds the value of the exemption for the same term is not eligible for the exemption in this bill. Each institution of higher education may enter into contracts with the United States government to furnish instruction to veterans at a tuition rate that covers the estimated cost of the instruction or at a tuition rate of \$100 per semester. A public junior college, public technical institute, or public state college may establish a fee for extraordinary costs associated with a specific course or program and the exemptions provided by this section do not apply to such fee.

Each institution of higher education must electronically report certain information to the Missouri Veterans Commission by January 31 for the preceding fall semester, by June 13 for the preceding spring semester, and September 30 for the preceding summer session. In determining whether to admit a person to any program, an institution of higher education cannot consider a person's eligibility under this bill.

The commission must set a procedure by which a veteran can waive his or her right to unused credit hours and assign the exemption for those hours to his or her child, in the event of the death of an eligible veteran, the unused credit hours can be assigned to his or her child, or other circumstances in which the credit must be designated to a child. The bill sets criteria a child must meet to be eligible to receive unused credit.