

HB 2166 -- VETERANS' AFFAIRS

SPONSOR: Hardwick

The bill proposes to expand the eligibility and benefits of educational assistance for members of the Missouri National Guard.

Currently, a member can qualify for a education assistance grant, if he possesses certain qualifications, to an approved public institution or an approved private institution of his or her choice while he or she is a member of the Missouri National Guard.

This bill changes the schools a member can attend from an approved public institution or approved private institution to an approved private institution or to any institution of postsecondary education that is required by statute to be, and currently is certified to operate by the Coordinating Board for Higher Education, within the Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development; that is institutionally accredited by an accrediting commission recognized by the United States Department of Education; that has operated continuously in this state for 5 or more years; that has no more than 50% of its students in correspondence programs; and that offers a one-year or two-year certificate, associate or baccalaureate degree programs, or graduate or professional degree programs.

This bill also allows the member to make a one-time transfer of his or her educational assistance, or the remaining portion of such educational assistance, to a spouse who is named as a dependant of the member in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System and the member has a minimum grade point average of two point five or higher on a four-point scale.

Currently, there is a business loan program for veteran-owned small businesses called the Boots-to-Business Program. The Program includes mentoring for the first 65 days. This bill specifies that the small businesses that received the mentoring must be part of the Boots-to-Business Program.

The bill waives the fees for obtaining a certification, or copy of such certification, of death of a veteran if the request is made by the veteran's legal representative, the executor or administrator of the veteran's estate, any family member of the veteran authorized to obtain a copy of such certification, or a qualified veterans' organization that takes possession of the veteran's remains with the intention of properly disposing of such remains. Only one certificate can be provided without cost. Any additional certificates will have a fee.