

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs and Space

BILL: SB 914

INTRODUCER: Senator Pizzo

SUBJECT: Educational Dollars for Duty Program

DATE: April 10, 2019

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Brown	Caldwell	MS	Pre-meeting
2.			ATD	
3.			AP	

I. Summary:

SB 914 revises the Educational Dollars for Duty Program, that provides tuition and fee assistance to eligible members of the Florida National Guard to take courses at a public or private postsecondary institution, public vocational-technical program, a training center for industry certification, or at a facility offering continuing education.

The bill expands participation by allowing an eligible member of the state National Guard who has already obtained a master's level degree through the program to apply for continued tuition and fee assistance to pursue a doctoral or professional degree. Current law prohibits a person who has obtained a master's degree through the program from receiving additional funds.

While the bill increases eligibility, tuition and fees are capped at 50 percent of the cost for a doctoral or professional degree program.

II. Present Situation:

The Educational Dollars for Duty Program, adopted into law by the Legislature in 1997¹, provides tuition and fee assistance to qualifying members of the state National Guard.² Under the Program, an eligible member may receive financial assistance while enrolled in an authorized course of study at an accredited public or private postsecondary institution or technical center, or at a training center for industry certification.³ An eligible member who has previously deployed on federal military orders while a member of the National Guard receives preference and priority under the program.⁴

¹ Chapter 97-158, L.O.F.

² Section 250.10(7), F.S.

³ *Id.*

⁴ Section 250.10(8)(a), F.S.

Eligibility requires that a member, commissioned officer, warrant officer, or enlisted person must:

- Be at least 17 years of age;
- Be presently domiciled in the state;
- Be an active drilling member in good standing in the Florida National Guard at the beginning of and through the academic term for which benefits are received;
- Maintain satisfactory participation in the National Guard for the school term for which benefits are received;
- Submit a memorandum of agreement to:
 - Comply with program rules;
 - Serve in the National Guard for the period specified in the enlistment or reenlistment contract; and
 - Authorize a release of information to the program from the educational institution.⁵

Courses funded by the program may include:

- Courses at a public or nonpublic postsecondary institution or technical center which is recognized as accredited by the United States Department of Education or licensed by the Commission for Independent Education;
- Training to obtain industry certifications that are approved the Department of Education;
- Continuing education to maintain a license or certification;
- Licensing and industry certification examination fees; and
- Developmental educational courses.⁶

Administered by the Department of Military Affairs (department), funding for the program is subject to legislative appropriation.⁷ If appropriated, the department may pay the full cost of tuition and fees for current National Guard members taking courses at a public postsecondary institution or public vocational-technical program.⁸ If, however, the eligible member is enrolled at a private postsecondary educational institution or vocational-technical program, the amount of payment is set at up to the highest in-state tuition and fees at a public postsecondary education institution or public vocational-technical program.

A person who has obtained a master's degree using the program is ineligible to receive additional tuition and fee assistance at a postsecondary institution or for training for industry certification.⁹ The person may still receive funding for tuition and courses, and fees for examinations, on courses in continuing education to maintain a license or certification, however.¹⁰

⁵ Section 250.10(7)(a), F.S.

⁶ Section 250.10(7)(c), F.S.

⁷ Section 250.10(7) and (8), F.S.; In Fiscal Year 2018-2019, the Legislature funded the program through an appropriation of \$4,200,000 (Specific Appropriation 2941, ch. 2018-9, L.O.F., available at <http://laws.flrules.org/2018/9> (last visited April 5, 2019)). Proviso language required the department to prioritize funding science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) undergraduate and postgraduate degree coursework, and capped at \$450,000 the use of funding for non-STEM postgraduate degree coursework. The Legislature also required funding for postgraduate degrees to be matched by the recipient at a rate of 50 percent.

⁸ Section 250.10(8), F.S.

⁹ Section 250.10(7)(b)1., F.S.

¹⁰ Section 250.10(7)(c)3., F.S.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

SB 914 revises the Educational Dollars for Duty Program by authorizing eligible members of the Florida National Guard who have obtained up to and including a master's degree to continue coursework to obtain a doctoral or professional degree. The program is also expanded to allow a holder of a doctoral or professional degree to receive program funds for tuition and courses, and fees for examinations or for continuing education to maintain a license or certification.

While the bill expands eligibility for a person to apply for payment for doctoral and professional degree courses, tuition and fee assistance is capped at 50 percent. Other courses continue to be eligible for full funding.

The bill requires the department to specify in guidelines for certification that a guard member who has earned an associate, bachelor's, or master's degree through the program or before becoming a member of the National Guard is still eligible to participate.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2019.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

The mandate restrictions do not apply because the bill does not require counties and municipalities to spend funds, reduce the counties' or municipalities' ability to raise revenue, or reduce the percentage of state tax shared with counties and municipalities.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None identified.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Qualifying members of the National Guard who have received a master's degree will be able to get tuition and fee assistance for additional coursework; however, funding for doctoral and professional degrees is capped under the bill at 50 percent.

Qualifying private postsecondary institutions, technical centers, and training centers may benefit from the expansion of tuition and fee assistance provided in the bill.

C. Government Sector Impact:

According to the Department of Military Affairs, 652 personnel in the Florida National Guard currently hold master's degrees. Assuming a per semester hour amount funded at 50 percent of the cost, each semester hour would cost \$430. Multiplying this cost per hour by 9 credit hours year is \$3,870 a year per enrolled member. Based on an estimate of 20 percent or 130 of the master's degree holders pursuing a doctorate or professional degree, multiplied by \$3,870, the expansion in the bill would cost an additional \$500,000 to fully fund. As the Program is subject to appropriation, however, the bill is fiscally neutral.

Fiscal impact on a public postsecondary institution is unknown, depending on whether the specific course hours paid for by a program participant would otherwise be paid for by a non-program student.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None identified.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends section 250.10, Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.