

SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

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

BILL: SB 264

SPONSOR: Senator Silver

SUBJECT: Educational Benefits for Children of Slain Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters

DATE: April 20, 2001

REVISED: 4/24/01

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>White</u>	<u>Wilson</u>	<u>GO</u>	<u>Fav/2 amendments</u>
2.	<u>Collins/McKee</u>	<u>Hickam</u>	<u>AED</u>	<u>Fav/1 amendment</u>
3.	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u>AP</u>	<u> </u>
4.	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
5.	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

I. Summary:

Currently, the children of a public safety officer or a firefighter who has been killed in the line of duty are statutorily entitled to have tuition, matriculation, and registration fees at state institutions waived while the child pursues a vocational-technical certificate or undergraduate education. This benefit may be received until the child turns twenty-five years of age.

The bill expands this benefit by additionally waiving the child's tuition, matriculation, and registration fees for graduate and postbaccalaureate professional studies at state institutions. The bill does not limit these graduate and postbaccalaureate benefits by age.

This bill substantially amends sections 112.19 and 112.191, Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

Pursuant to ss. 112.19 and 112.191, F.S., certain death benefits must be provided to the beneficiaries or the estate of slain public safety officers and firefighters. Public safety officers, who must be employed by the state or one of its political subdivisions, are defined as: law enforcement officers, correctional officers, correctional probation officers, state attorney or public defender investigators, members of bomb disposal units, and other certified officers, whose duties require the service of process or serving as a bailiff in circuit or county court.¹ Firefighters, who must also be employed by the state or one of its political subdivisions, are defined as full-time certified firefighters or volunteer firefighters whose primary duties are the prevention and extinguishing of fires, the protection of life and property from fire, and the enforcement of fire prevention and control law.²

¹ Section 112.19(1)(b), F.S.

² Section 112.191(b), F.S.

Death benefits must be paid as follows:

*\$25,000 when the officer or firefighter, while engaged in the performance of his or her duties, is accidentally killed or receives accidental bodily injury which results in the officer's or firefighter's death;

*\$50,000 when the accidental death occurs as a result of the officer's response to fresh pursuit or to what the officer reasonably believes to be an emergency, or as a result of the firefighter's response to what is reasonably believed to be an emergency involving the protection of life or property; or

*\$75,000 when the officer or firefighter, while engaged in the performance of his or her duties, is intentionally killed or dies as a result of an intentional act.³

Furthermore, in limited circumstances, payments for burial expenses and health insurance premiums of spouses and children are required.⁴

Finally, the children of an officer or firefighter may also be entitled to post-high school educational expenses.⁵ In order for this benefit to attach, the death must have occurred on or after: (a) June 22, 1990, and must have been the accidental result of the officer's response to fresh pursuit or to what the officer reasonably believed to be an emergency, or the accidental result of the firefighter's response to what he or she reasonably believed to be an emergency involving the protection of life or property; or (b) July 1, 1980, and must have been the result of an intentional act.⁶ If the conditions are met, the state is required to waive "tuition and matriculation and registration fees" for children of the officer or firefighter who pursue vocational-technical certificates and undergraduate educations at state institutions.⁷

"Tuition" is statutorily defined as the additional fee for instruction provided by a public postsecondary state educational institutions charged to non-Florida students.⁸ "Matriculation fee" is statutorily defined as the basic fee charged to a student for instruction provided by a postsecondary state educational institution.⁹ There is no statutory definition for the term "registration fees." Representatives from the State University System (SUS) have stated that in practice the term "registration fees" has been construed to include the following

³ Sections 112.19(2) and 112.191(2), F.S.

⁴ Sections 112.19(2)(f)-(h) and 112.191(2)(f)-(h), F.S.

⁵ Sections 112.19(3) and 112.191(3), F.S.

⁶ Data from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement provides that 35 municipal, county, state and university officers have been accidentally killed in the line of duty since 1991, and 77 municipal, county, state and university officers have been intentionally killed in the line of duty since 1980. Data from the Department of Corrections provides that a total of two correctional and correctional probation officers have been accidentally killed in the line of duty since 1990, and four correctional and correctional probation officers have been intentionally killed since 1980. Data from the Fire Marshall's Office provides that 50 firefighters have been killed in the line of duty since 1980, with 19 of those deaths occurring since 1990. Information regarding the accidental or intentional nature of the firefighters' deaths was unavailable.

⁷ Section 112.19, F.S.

⁸ Section 228.041(33), F.S.

⁹ Section 228.041(32), F.S.

statutorily-authorized fees: (a) student financial aid;¹⁰ (b) building and Capital Improvement Trust Fund fees;¹¹ and (c) health, athletic, activity and service fees.¹²

These educational fee waivers are limited to a total of 120 credit hours and may only continue until the child is twenty-five years of age. Additionally, the child must be in good standing with the institution and comply with the institution's discipline and scholarship requirements while in either a part- or full-time program.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 1. The bill would expand the educational benefits currently available to the children of slain officers and firefighters by providing that the child's tuition, matriculation, and registration fees would also be waived for graduate or postbaccalaureate professional degree programs at a state institution.¹³ As is currently required for the waiver of fees for vocational-technical and undergraduate studies, the child must be in good standing with the institution and comply with the institution's discipline and scholarship requirements while in either a part- or full-time program. Distinguishably, however, the graduate and postbaccalaureate professional educational benefits have no age limitation or residency requirements (Note: Amendment #1 adopted by the Appropriations Subcommittee on Education specifies that the child must be a resident of Florida and eligibility continues until the child's twenty-ninth birthday). The age limitation of twenty-five years remains applicable to the vocational-technical and undergraduate benefits under the bill.

Section 2. The bill takes effect July 1, 2001.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

¹⁰ Section 240.209, F.S.

¹¹ Section 240.209, F.S.

¹² Section 240.235, F.S.

¹³ The terms "graduate" and "postbaccalaureate professional" study are not defined in the statutes; however, the Board of Regents' rules indicate that "graduate" study means postbaccalureate studies leading to nonprofessional school master degrees and doctorates, and that "postbaccalaureate professional" study means law, medical, dental, or veterinary school. *See* Rule 6C-6.003, F.A.C.

V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

The bill would eliminate the fees for graduate and postbaccalaureate study at state institutions for the children of slain public safety officers and firefighters.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

In FY 1999-2000, \$23,627 in educational fees were waived pursuant to ss. 112.19 and 112.191, F.S. Of this amount, \$7,489 was waived in the state community college system for 142 credit hours, and \$16,138 in the state university system (SUS) for 17 children.¹⁴ Fee waiver data for FY 1999-2000, is not yet available for the state vocational-technical school system; however, in FY 1998-1999, \$739 in vocational-technical fees were waived for 591 contact hours.

There will be a fiscal impact due to the bill's expansion of the educational benefits available for children of slain public safety officers and firefighters. The amount of the increase, however, is indeterminate as it is unknown how many eligible persons will take advantage of the graduate and postbaccalaureate fee waivers. A rough estimate of the potential increase can be calculated by using the aforementioned FY 1999-2000 fee waiver data from the community colleges and SUS.

According to this data, it appears that 22 students received undergraduate fee waivers in 1999-2000. For resident students, the average cost per year of full-time graduate study is approximately \$3,735, and of full-time professional school study is approximately \$8,617.¹⁵ For non-resident students, the average cost per year of full-time graduate study is approximately \$12,825, and of professional school study is \$23,633.¹⁶ If 22 students received graduate and/or professional school fee waivers, the cost of the bill could range from \$82,170 (this figure assumes 22 resident children attending graduate school) to \$519,926 (this figure assumes 22 non-resident children attending professional school). (Note: Amendment #1 adopted by the Appropriations Subcommittee on Education specifies that the child must be a Florida resident and that eligibility continues until the child's twenty-ninth birthday, which will reduce the fiscal impact of the bill.)

¹⁴ The total number of children benefited in the community college system during FY 1999-2000, is not available; however, assuming that each student enrolled in the standard 30-hour per year schedule, it would appear that approximately five students benefited from the 142 hours waived.

¹⁵ The following sets forth the approximate average cost per year of professional studies for resident students as approved by the Board of Regents for 2000-2001: (a) law school fees are \$4,117; (b) medical school fees are \$11,602; (c) dental school fees are \$10,117; and (d) veterinary school fees are \$8,631.

¹⁶ The following sets forth the approximate average cost per year of professional studies for non-resident students as approved by the Board of Regents for 2000-2001: (a) law school fees are \$13,586; (b) medical school fees are \$31,062; (c) dental school fees are \$27,039; and (d) veterinary school fees are \$22,846.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

Existing law, along with amendments to that law contained in the bill, provide for the waiver of “tuition and matriculation and registration fees.” Current law defines “tuition” as the additional fee charged to non-resident students, and “matriculation” as the basic instruction fee charged to all students. The term “registration,” however, is not statutorily defined, but in practice, according to representatives of the SUS, has been interpreted as meaning other statutorily-authorized fees, i.e., student financial aid fees, building fees, Capital Improvement Trust Fund fees and health, athletic, activity and service fees. In order to clarify precisely which fees are subject to waiver, staff recommends an amendment that substitutes the phrase, “tuition, matriculation, and other statutorily authorized fees” for the phrase, “tuition and matriculation and registration fees.”

VII. Related Issues:

As discussed previously, the terms “tuition” and “matriculation” are defined by statute. “Tuition” means: “The additional fee for instruction provided by a public postsecondary educational institution in this state, which fee is charged to a non-Florida student as defined in rules of the State Board of Education, the State Board of Community Colleges, or the Board of Regents. A charge for any other purpose shall not be included within this fee.”¹⁷ “Matriculation” means: “The basic fee charged to a student for instruction provided by a public postsecondary educational institution in this state. A charge for any other purpose shall not be included within this fee.”¹⁸

The Board of Regents’ rule providing a definition of “tuition” differs, however, from the statutory definition. Rule 6C-7.001, F.A.C., states that tuition means, “fees assessed to students for enrollment in credit courses at any of the state universities,” and further provides that these fees are: (a) matriculation fees; (b) student financial aid fees; (c) building and capital improvement trust fund fees; and (d) health, athletic, activity and service fees. Although these fees included in the rule’s definition of “tuition” are statutorily authorized to be charged by the universities, the rule’s definition does not conform to the statutory definition of “tuition.”

Pursuant to s. 120.536, F.S., all rules adopted by an agency must implement a specific law. Consequently, the definition of “tuition” contained in Rule 6C-7.001, F.A.C., may be subject to a Chapter 120, F.S., rule challenge due to the fact that it contravenes the statutory definition of “tuition.” Staff recommends that the Board of Regents either amend its rule to conform to statute, or seek legislative amendments to the statutory definition of “tuition” to bring its rule into conformity.

VIII. Amendments:

#1 by Governmental Oversight and Productivity:

Substitutes the term “statutorily authorized fees” for the term “registration fees” in order to clarify precisely which educational fees are subject to waiver pursuant to the bill.

¹⁷ Section 228.041(33), F.S.

¹⁸ Section 228.041(32), F.S.

#2 by Governmental Oversight and Productivity:

Substitutes the term “statutorily authorized fees” for the term “registration fees” in order to clarify precisely which educational fees are subject to waiver pursuant to the bill.

#1 by Appropriations Subcommittee on Education

Specifies that the child must be a Florida resident at the time of enrollment and eligibility continues until the child’s twenty-ninth birthday.

This Senate staff analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill’s sponsor or the Florida Senate.
