

By Senator Arrington

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to the Educational Dollars for Duty
3 program; providing a short title; transferring,
4 renumbering, and amending s. 250.10(7) and (8), F.S.;
5 requiring the program to set aside a certain amount of
6 funds to provide tuition assistance to spouses and
7 children of active members of the Florida National
8 Guard; authorizing the Legislature to increase the
9 amount of such funds; requiring the Department of
10 Military Affairs to oversee implementation and
11 enforcement; requiring the department to establish
12 certain procedures; providing an effective date.

13
14 WHEREAS, members of the Florida National Guard are
15 frequently deployed and respond to emergencies, often taking
16 them away from their families, and

17 WHEREAS, many National Guard families are left alone during
18 a member's overseas deployments and during natural disasters,
19 often having to take care of themselves while the member is away
20 helping Florida or our nation, and

21 WHEREAS, providing educational support to the families of
22 National Guard members will offer significant relief and support
23 to these dedicated individuals, NOW, THEREFORE,

24
25 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

26
27 Section 1. This act may be cited as the "Educational
28 Dollars for Duty Program Expansion Act."

29 Section 2. Present subsections (7) and (8) of section

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30 250.10, Florida Statutes, are transferred and renumbered as
31 section 250.101, Florida Statutes, and that section is amended,
32 to read:

33 250.101 Educational Dollars for Duty program.—

34 (1)~~(7)~~ The Adjutant General shall develop an education
35 assistance program for members in good standing of the Florida
36 National Guard who enroll in an authorized course of study at a
37 public or nonpublic postsecondary institution or technical
38 center in the state which has been accredited by an accrediting
39 body recognized by the United States Department of Education or
40 licensed by the Commission for Independent Education. Education
41 assistance also may be used for training to obtain industry
42 certifications approved by the Department of Education pursuant
43 to s. 1008.44 and continuing education to maintain license
44 certifications. The education assistance program shall be known
45 as the Educational Dollars for Duty program (EDD).

46 (a) The program shall establish application requirements,
47 including, but not limited to, requirements that the applicant:

- 48 1. Be 17 years of age or older.
- 49 2. Be presently domiciled in the state.
- 50 3. Be an active drilling member and in good standing in the
51 Florida National Guard at the beginning of and throughout the
52 entire academic term for which benefits are received.
- 53 4. Maintain continuous satisfactory participation in the
54 Florida National Guard for the school term for which benefits
55 are received.
- 56 5. Upon enrollment in the program, complete a memorandum of
57 agreement to:
 - 58 a. Comply with the rules of the program.

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59 b. Serve in the Florida National Guard for the period
60 specified in the member's enlistment or reenlistment contract.

61 c. Authorize the release of information pursuant to
62 subparagraph (d)6. by the postsecondary institution or technical
63 center to the education service office of the Department of
64 Military Affairs, subject to applicable federal and state law.

65 (b) The program shall define those members of the Florida
66 National Guard who are ineligible to participate in the program
67 and those courses of study which are not authorized for the
68 program.

69 1. Ineligible members include, but are not limited to, a
70 member, commissioned officer, warrant officer, or enlisted
71 person who has obtained a master's degree using the program.

72 2. Inactive members of the Florida National Guard and
73 members of the Individual Ready Reserve are not eligible to
74 participate in the program.

75 3. Courses not authorized include noncredit courses,
76 courses that do not meet degree requirements, courses that do
77 not meet requirements for completion of career training, or
78 other courses as determined by program definitions.

79 4. The program may not pay repeat course fees.

80 (c) The program may include, but is not limited to:

81 1. Courses at a public or nonpublic postsecondary
82 institution or technical center in the state which is accredited
83 by an accrediting body recognized by the United States
84 Department of Education or licensed by the Commission for
85 Independent Education.

86 2. Training to obtain industry certifications, limited to
87 certifications approved by the Department of Education under s.

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88 1008.44.

89 3. Continuing education to maintain a license or
90 certification. Notwithstanding subparagraph (b)1., members who
91 have obtained a master's degree using the program are eligible
92 for funding under this subparagraph.

93 4. Licensing and industry certification examination fees.
94 Notwithstanding subparagraph (b)1., members who have obtained a
95 master's degree using the program are eligible for funding under
96 this subparagraph.

97 5. Notwithstanding subparagraph (b)3., developmental
98 educational courses.

99 (d) The Adjutant General shall adopt rules for the overall
100 policy, guidance, administration, implementation, and proper use
101 of the program. Such rules must include, but need not be limited
102 to:

103 1. Guidelines for certification by the Adjutant General of
104 a guard member's eligibility.

105 2. Procedures for notification to a postsecondary
106 institution or technical center of a guard member's termination
107 of eligibility.

108 3. Guidelines for approving courses of study that are
109 authorized for the program, including online courses, industry
110 certification training, and continuing education to maintain
111 license certifications.

112 4. Guidelines for approving the use of program funds for
113 licensing and industry certification examination fees.

114 5. Procedures for restitution when a guard member fails to
115 comply with the penalties described in this section.

116 6. Procedures that require a public or nonpublic

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117 postsecondary institution or technical center that receives
118 funding from the program to provide information regarding course
119 enrollment, course withdrawal, course cancellation, course
120 completion, course failure, and grade verification of enrolled
121 members to the education service office of the Department of
122 Military Affairs.

123 7. Guidelines for the payment of tuition and fees, not to
124 exceed the highest in-state tuition rate charged by a public
125 postsecondary institution in the state.

126 (2)~~(8)~~ Subject to appropriations, the Department of
127 Military Affairs may pay the full cost of tuition and fees for
128 required courses for current members of the Florida National
129 Guard. Members are eligible to use the program upon enlistment
130 in the Florida National Guard. If a member is enrolled in a
131 nonpublic postsecondary education institution or a nonpublic
132 vocational-technical program, the Department of Military Affairs
133 shall pay an amount that may not exceed the rate of the highest
134 in-state tuition and fees at a public postsecondary education
135 institution or public vocational-technical program.

136 (a) The Adjutant General shall give preference and priority
137 to eligible members who have deployed on federal military orders
138 while a member of the Florida National Guard.

139 (b) The Department of Military Affairs may reimburse a
140 member for student textbook and instructional material costs in
141 accordance with limits set each fiscal year based on funding
142 availability and regardless of the source of tuition funding,
143 but only after tuition and fees for all eligible members are
144 paid for that fiscal year.

145 (c) Penalties for noncompliance with program requirements

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146 include, but are not limited to, the following:

147 1. If a member of the Florida National Guard receives
148 payment of tuition and fees for an academic term and fails to
149 maintain satisfactory participation in the Florida National
150 Guard during that academic term, the member shall reimburse the
151 Department of Military Affairs all tuition charges and student
152 fees for the academic term for which the member received
153 payment.

154 2. If a member of the Florida National Guard leaves the
155 Florida National Guard during the period specified in the
156 member's enlistment or reenlistment contract, the member shall
157 reimburse the Department of Military Affairs all tuition charges
158 and student fees for which the member received payments,
159 regardless of whether the obligation to reimburse the department
160 was incurred before, on, or after July 1, 2009, unless the
161 Adjutant General finds that there are justifiable extenuating
162 circumstances.

163 3. If the service of a member of the Florida National Guard
164 is terminated or the member is placed on scholastic probation
165 while receiving payments, the member shall reimburse the
166 Department of Military Affairs all tuition charges and student
167 fees for the academic term for which the member received
168 payment.

169 4. If a member defaults on any reimbursement made under
170 this paragraph, the department may charge the member the maximum
171 interest rate authorized by law.

172 (3) (a) The Educational Dollars for Duty program shall set
173 aside \$500,000 of existing funds every fiscal year to provide
174 financial assistance for up to 50 percent of tuition to spouses

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175 and children of active members of the Florida National Guard.
176 The amount set aside may be increased by the Legislature as
177 deemed necessary.

178 (b) The Department of Military Affairs shall oversee the
179 implementation and enforcement of this subsection. The
180 department shall establish procedures for verifying eligibility
181 and distributing funds.

182 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2025.