

By: Zaffirini, Ogden

S.B. No. 31

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to financial assistance for students who complete certain coursework at two-year public institutions of higher education.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Chapter 56, Education Code, is amended by adding Subchapter Z to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER Z. OTHER STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Sec. 56.901. GRANTS FOR STUDENTS COMPLETING CERTAIN COURSEWORK AT TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION. (a) In this section:

(1) "Coordinating board" means the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

(2) "General academic teaching institution," "public junior college," "public state college," and "public technical institute" have the meanings assigned by Section 61.003.

(b) The coordinating board shall establish a program under which an eligible student is entitled to receive financial assistance in the form of a grant to be applied toward the payment of tuition and fees at a general academic teaching institution.

(c) A student is eligible to receive a grant under this section if the student:

(1) is a resident of this state;

(2) graduates from a public or accredited private high school in this state;

1 (3) enrolls at a public junior college, public state
2 college, or public technical institute not later than the first
3 fall semester following the student's graduation from high school;

4 (4) before the third fall semester following the
5 student's graduation from high school, and with a cumulative grade
6 point average of at least 3.0 on a four-point scale or the
7 equivalent, completes the core curriculum at or receives an
8 associate degree from a public junior college, public state
9 college, or public technical institute, regardless of whether the
10 student:

11 (A) remains continuously enrolled at the same
12 college or institute during that period; or

13 (B) completes through concurrent enrollment any
14 portion of the coursework required to complete the core curriculum
15 or to receive an associate degree;

16 (5) after completing the core curriculum or receiving
17 an associate degree as described by Subdivision (4), enrolls at a
18 general academic teaching institution not later than the third fall
19 semester following the student's graduation from high school;

20 (6) maintains a cumulative grade point average of at
21 least 3.0 on a four-point scale or the equivalent while enrolled at
22 a general academic teaching institution;

23 (7) meets financial need requirements prescribed by
24 coordinating board rule; and

25 (8) complies with any additional eligibility
26 requirements prescribed by coordinating board rule.

27 (d) Except as provided by Subsections (e) and (f), the

1 amount of a grant under this section is \$700 for each semester or
2 other academic term in which the student is enrolled at a general
3 academic teaching institution.

4 (e) Subject to the limitation provided by Subsection (f), if
5 after the application of any other state or federal grant aid a
6 student owes to a general academic teaching institution for a
7 semester or other academic term an amount of tuition and fees that
8 is less than the amount of a grant otherwise provided by this
9 section for that semester or other term, the amount of the grant is
10 equal to the amount of tuition and fees owed by the student that is
11 not covered by that other grant aid.

12 (f) The total amount of grants under this section for an
13 academic year may not exceed \$1,400.

14 (g) Except as provided by Subsection (k), a student is not
15 eligible for a grant under this section for a semester or other
16 academic term that begins after the second anniversary of the date
17 the student first enrolled at a general academic teaching
18 institution.

19 (h) If a student fails to meet any of the requirements of
20 Subsection (c) after the completion of any semester or other
21 academic term, the student may not receive a grant under this
22 section for the next semester or term in which the student enrolls.
23 A student may become eligible to receive a grant under this section
24 in a subsequent semester or term if the student:

25 (1) completes a semester or term during which the
26 student is not eligible for a grant under this section; and

27 (2) meets all of the requirements of Subsection (c).

1 (i) At the beginning of each school year, each public high
2 school in this state shall provide information regarding the
3 requirements of the program under this section to each senior
4 student enrolled at the high school and to a parent, conservator, or
5 guardian of the student. Each public junior college, public state
6 college, or public technical institute shall notify each entering
7 undergraduate student of the program requirements not later than
8 the sixth week of the student's first semester or term.

9 (j) The Texas Education Agency and the coordinating board
10 jointly shall prepare a publication that includes the information
11 required to be provided under Subsection (i) and shall post that
12 publication on the website of each agency in a form that enables a
13 public high school, public junior college, public state college, or
14 public technical institute to reproduce the information for
15 distribution to students, parents, and other persons as required by
16 this section.

17 (k) The coordinating board shall adopt rules to administer
18 this section, including rules requiring an eligible student to
19 apply for a grant under this section and to submit the information
20 required to verify the student's eligibility. The rules must
21 provide procedures by which an otherwise eligible student may be
22 granted additional time to receive grants under this section if the
23 student shows hardship or other good cause that prevented the
24 student from successfully completing the core curriculum,
25 receiving an associate degree, or enrolling in an institution
26 within the applicable period prescribed by this section or from
27 maintaining a cumulative grade point average as required by this

1 section. For purposes of this subsection, hardship or other good
2 cause includes:

- 3 (1) a severe illness or other debilitating condition;
4 (2) responsibility for the care of a sick or injured
5 person or person otherwise in need of assistance; or
6 (3) active duty or other service in the United States
7 armed forces.

8 (1) A student may not receive a grant under this section for
9 a semester or term before the 2011 fall semester and may not
10 establish eligibility for a grant based in any part on higher
11 education coursework completed before the 2009 fall semester. This
12 subsection expires January 1, 2013.

13 SECTION 2. As soon as practicable after the effective date
14 of this Act, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall
15 adopt rules for the administration of Section 56.901, Education
16 Code, as added by this Act. The coordinating board may adopt the
17 initial rules in the manner provided by law for emergency rules.

18 SECTION 3. This Act does not make an appropriation. This
19 Act takes effect only if a specific appropriation for the
20 implementation of the Act is provided in a general appropriations
21 act of the 81st Legislature.

22 SECTION 4. A provision in this Act that creates a new
23 governmental program, creates a new entitlement, or imposes a new
24 duty on a governmental entity is not mandatory during a fiscal
25 period for which the legislature has not made a specific
26 appropriation to implement the provision.

27 SECTION 5. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives

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1 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
2 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
3 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
4 Act takes effect September 1, 2009.