H.B. No. 539

AN ACT

relating to the automatic admission to general academic teaching institutions and eligibility for certain scholarships of a student who is the valedictorian of the student's high school graduating class.

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

SECTION 1.  Section 51.803, Education Code, is amended by adding Subsection (d-1) and amending Subsection (h) to read as follows:

(d-1)  In addition to admissions required under Subsection (a), each general academic teaching institution shall admit an applicant for admission to the institution as an undergraduate student if the applicant graduated as the valedictorian of the student's high school graduating class in one of the two school years preceding the academic year for which the student is applying for admission and satisfies the requirements of Subsections (a)(1) through (3). Subsection (b) applies to an applicant for admission under this subsection. An applicant admitted under this subsection is considered automatically admitted for purposes of Subsection (a), (a-1), or (a-2), as applicable.

(h)  An institution that admits under this section an applicant qualified for automatic admission under Subsection (a) or (d-1) may admit the applicant for either the fall semester of the academic year for which the applicant applies or for the summer session preceding that fall semester, as determined by the institution.

SECTION 2.  Section 56.484, Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 56.484.  INITIAL ELIGIBILITY FOR SCHOLARSHIP. To be eligible for a scholarship under this subchapter, a student must:

(1)  have graduated from a public or accredited private high school in this state while ranked in the top 10 percent or as the valedictorian of the student's graduating class, subject to Section 56.487(b);

(2)  have completed the recommended or advanced high school curriculum established under Section 28.025 or its equivalent;

(3)  have applied for admission as a first-time freshman student for the 2010-2011 academic year or a subsequent academic year to an institution of higher education that has elected to offer admissions for that academic year to applicants as provided by Section 51.803(a-1);

(4)  enroll as a first-time freshman student in an institution of higher education not later than the 16th month after the date of the student's high school graduation;

(5)  have been awarded a TEXAS grant under Subchapter M for the same semester or other academic term for which the scholarship will be awarded;

(6)  be a Texas resident under Section 54.052; and

(7)  comply with any other eligibility requirements established by coordinating board rule.

SECTION 3.  The changes in law made by this Act to Section 51.803, Education Code, apply beginning with admissions to a general academic teaching institution for the 2019-2020 academic year. Admissions to a general academic teaching institution for an academic year before that academic year are governed by the law in effect immediately before the effective date of this Act, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose.

SECTION 4.  The change in law made by this Act to Section 56.484, Education Code, applies beginning with scholarships awarded for the 2019-2020 academic year. Scholarships awarded for an academic year before that academic year are governed by the law in effect immediately before the effective date of this Act, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose.

SECTION 5.  This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2019.

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    President of the Senate Speaker of the House

I certify that H.B. No. 539 was passed by the House on April 3, 2019, by the following vote:  Yeas 147, Nays 0, 2 present, not voting.

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Chief Clerk of the House

I certify that H.B. No. 539 was passed by the Senate on May 22, 2019, by the following vote:  Yeas 31, Nays 0.

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Secretary of the Senate

APPROVED:  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

                    Date

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                  Governor