

SESSION OF 2024

SUPPLEMENTAL NOTE ON HOUSE BILL NO. 2567

As Amended by House Committee on Education

Brief*

HB 2567, as amended, would establish the Kansas National Guard Education Master's for Enhanced Readiness and Global Excellence (EMERGE) Program to provide financial assistance to Kansas National Guard members pursuing master's degree at a Kansas educational institution.

EMERGE Program (Section 4 & 5)

National Guard Member Selection

The bill would require, on or before July 1 of each academic year, the Adjutant General to select up to 100 eligible National Guard members who have applied to the EMERGE Program to receive assistance. The bill would cap the number of eligible National Guard members in the program at 200 members in any one school year.

Financial Assistance

The bill would, subject to appropriations, provide eligible National Guard members who are enrolled at a Kansas educational institution and participating in the program to receive financial assistance for tuition and fees each semester. The bill would provide participants with financial assistance in an amount equal to the tuition and required fees for the semester, with the following requirements and adjustments:

*Supplemental notes are prepared by the Legislative Research Department and do not express legislative intent. The supplemental note and fiscal note for this bill may be accessed on the Internet at <http://www.kslegislature.org>

- The number of credit hours may not exceed 15.0 credit hours in one semester;
- The aggregate amount of credit hours taken by a participant may not exceed 150.0 percent of the total credit hours needed for the master's degree;
- The course is not being repeated or taken in excess of the master's degree program requirements;
- The tuition and required fees do not exceed the maximum rate that would be charged by a state educational institution for enrollment of the eligible National Guard member; and
- The amounts of federal or institution tuition assistance received by the eligible National Guard member shall be deducted from that participant's state benefits.

Participation Requirements

The bill would require National Guard members participating in the program to agree, in writing, to complete the member's current service obligation and to serve actively and in good standing for no less than 48 months following the completion of the program. The bill would also require participating members to submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and apply for any other federal tuition assistance available.

Participating National Guard members would be required to remain in good standing at their Kansas educational institution, make satisfactory progress toward completion of the requirements of their degree, and maintain a grade point average of no less than 2.75 in order to continue their participation in the program.

Clawbacks

The bill would require any participating National Guard member who received benefits under the program but failed to meet the requirement of continued service to repay to the State an amount of money determined in the following manner:

- Determine the total amount of assistance paid to such member under the program;
- Divide the amount determined by 48; and
- Multiply the amount determined by the number of months such member did not serve as required by the bill.

All repayments made in this manner would be required to be deposited in the State Treasury and be credited to the Kansas National Guard EMERGE Repayment Fund (Fund).

Kansas Board of Regents (Section 3)

The bill would require the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR) to administer the program and carry out the following activities:

- Establish a mechanism to ensure distribution of funds for tuition and fee reimbursement to Kansas educational institutions;
- Enter into a cooperative relationship with the Adjutant General to ensure efficient operation of the program;
- Develop and effectuate a system of accountability for all disbursements of funds and provide written reports as required; and

- Coordinate with the Adjutant General to create a procedure to ensure initial and ongoing eligibility of participating National Guard members in the program.

The bill would allow, but not require, KBOR to establish rules and regulations to assist in administering the program.

Definitions (Section 2)

The bill would define, among others, the following terms:

- “Educational Program” would mean a master’s degree program offered or maintained by a Kansas educational institution that leads to the award of a master’s degree to an eligible guard member upon satisfactory completion of course work;
- “Eligible guard member” would mean any member of the Kansas National Guard who has been accepted into an eligible master’s degree program and who is not under a suspension of favorable flag action or on the unit unfavorable information file; and
- “Kansas educational institution” would mean a state educational institution as defined by law, Washburn University, or an accredited independent institution as defined by law.

Establishment of Fund (Section 6)

The bill would establish the Fund in the State Treasury. The Fund would be administered by KBOR, and all expenditures from the Fund would be required to be for National Guard member financial assistance under the program.

Background

The bill was introduced by Representative Turk and 47 other Representatives.

House Committee on Education

In the House Committee hearing, **proponent** testimony was provided by Representatives B. Carpenter and Turk, as well as representatives of KBOR and the National Guard Association of Kansas. The conferees generally stated the need for the program to function as a recruitment and retention tool for the Kansas National Guard while also ensuring guard members were able to receive the advanced education they needed for promotion.

Written-only proponent testimony was provided by the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of Kansas and Kansas Independent College Association.

Neutral testimony was provided by a representative of the Office of the Adjutant General.

No other testimony was provided.

The House Committee made the following amendments to the bill:

- Included Washburn University in the definition of a “Kansas educational institution”;
- Changed the requirement for KBOR to propagate rules and regulations for the EMERGE Program from “shall” to “may”;
- Clarified that both federal and institutional tuition assistance would be deducted from a participating member’s state benefits;

- Shortened the length of service following completion of a master's program from 72 to 48 months;
- Removed requirements for participating members to obtain a certificate of satisfactory participation for their commanding officer to provide to the participant's educational institution; and
- Modified the clawback calculations to reflect the reduced service time following completion of a master's program.

Fiscal Information

According to the fiscal note prepared by the Division of the Budget on the bill, as introduced, KBOR estimates the aggregate cost of tuition and fees in FY 2025 for 100 participants to be \$1.1 million, with costs in subsequent years of \$2.2 million for 200 participants.

The Adjutant General's Department stated the bill would not have a fiscal effect on the agency.

Any fiscal effect associated with the bill is not reflected in *The FY 2025 Governor's Budget*.

Education; military; Kansas National Guard; Kansas Board of Regents; postsecondary education; EMERGE Program; financial aid; graduate programs