

Veterans Home; Tuition Waiver Grants; HB 2021

HB 2021 authorizes the Kansas Development Finance Authority (KDFA), on and after July 1, 2021, to issue bonds, not to exceed \$10.5 million, for the purpose of financing the construction of a state veterans home facility located in northeast Kansas, including, but not limited to, in Douglas, Jefferson, Leavenworth, Shawnee, and Wyandotte counties. Proceeds from the sale of bonds would constitute the State's required 35.0 percent match for a specified federal grant program. The maturity date on the bonds cannot be later than 20 years from the initial issuance. Debt service could be paid from the State General Fund or any appropriate special revenue fund. The bill requires the KDFA and the State Finance Council to approve the issuance of any bonds for this purpose.

Additionally, the bill amends a statute that established tuition waiver grants of the State Board of Regents for dependents and spouses of public safety officers and those who died in or as a result of military service on or after September 11, 2001 to extend benefits to additional persons. The bill adds eligibility for dependents and spouses of public safety officers injured or disabled while performing duties as a public safety officer and dependents and spouses of those entitled to compensation for a service-connected disability of at least 80 percent as a result of injuries or accidents sustained in combat after September 11, 2001. The bill adds a definition of "public safety employee" to include employees of a law enforcement office, fire department, emergency medical services provider, or state correctional institution and adds public safety employees to the definition of "public safety officer."

Subject to appropriations, any Kansas educational institution that enrolls without charge of tuition or fees any dependent or spouse of a public safety officer may file a claim with the State Board for reimbursement of the amount of such tuition and fees. The bill would cap total reimbursement for tuition reimbursements in any fiscal year, at \$350,000.