

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 184 Session of 2005

INTRODUCED BY STAIRS, ROEBUCK, CREIGHTON, FLEAGLE, O'NEILL, SCAVELLO, BISHOP, CURRY, GRUCELA, KIRKLAND, PALLONE, SHANER, STURLA, ALLEN, BIANCUCCI, BOYD, BUNT, CALTAGIRONE, CAPPELLI, CORNELL, DALEY, FABRIZIO, FAIRCHILD, GEIST, GEORGE, GINGRICH, GOODMAN, HARPER, LEDERER, MANN, MARKOSEK, McCALL, McGEEHAN, MELIO, S. MILLER, PRESTON, REED, REICHLEY, SAYLOR, SCHRODER, B. SMITH, E. Z. TAYLOR, THOMAS, WALKO, WANSACZ, WASHINGTON, WILT AND YOUNGBLOOD, FEBRUARY 1, 2005

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, FEBRUARY 1, 2005

AN ACT

1 Establishing the Pennsylvania Scholastic Achievement Award to
2 recognize deserving Pennsylvania students and to motivate
3 such students to attend qualified eligible institutions in
4 this Commonwealth by providing them with a full tuition
5 scholarship or a scholarship of an equivalent dollar amount.

6 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
7 hereby enacts as follows:

8 Section 1. Short title.

9 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Pennsylvania
10 Scholastic Achievement Award Act.

11 Section 2. Purpose.

12 The Pennsylvania Scholastic Achievement Award is hereby
13 established within the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance
14 Agency to recognize students' academic achievements and to
15 reward them for their academic excellence by providing them with
16 full tuition scholarship awards to attend an eligible

1 institution in this Commonwealth.

2 Section 3. Definitions.

3 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall
4 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
5 context clearly indicates otherwise:

6 "Agency." The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance
7 Agency.

8 "Award." A full tuition scholarship or its equivalent dollar
9 scholarship to an eligible institution under this act.

10 "Eligible institution." A State-owned college or university
11 that is authorized by the Department of Education to provide
12 approved courses of study and grant degrees.

13 "Fund." The Pennsylvania Scholastic Achievement Award Fund
14 established under section 9.

15 "School entity." A public school district, joint school,
16 charter school or area vocational-technical school.

17 Section 4. Selection process.

18 (a) Criteria and procedures.--The agency shall adopt a
19 policy setting the criteria and procedures to be used in
20 selecting award recipients. The criteria and procedures shall
21 reflect academic achievement and, at a minimum, require that
22 students:

23 (1) Be a current 12th-grade student enrolled at a
24 Commonwealth school entity.

25 (2) Be domiciled in this Commonwealth.

26 (3) Hold a 3.0 grade point average, on a scale of 4.0,
27 by the end of the student's junior year of high school.

28 (4) Attain a composite score of 1000 or higher on the
29 Scholastic Aptitude Test, or a minimum composite score of 21
30 on the American College Test.

1 (5) Rank academically in the top 5% of the student's
2 graduating class.

3 (6) Attain proficiency in reading, writing and
4 mathematics on either the Pennsylvania System of School
5 Assessment test administered in grade 11 or 12 or local
6 assessment aligned with academic standards and State
7 assessments.

8 (7) Be accepted for admission as a full-time student in
9 the fall term at an eligible institution immediately
10 following high school graduation.

11 (b) Application.--Eligible high school students who are
12 enrolled in a school entity and who wish to apply for an award
13 must submit an application to the agency as well as file the
14 Free Application for Federal Student Aid at the appropriate
15 time.

16 (c) Nature of eligibility.--The Pennsylvania Scholastic
17 Achievement Award shall be a merit-based program, and the agency
18 shall not base eligibility on income requirements.

19 Section 5. Full tuition scholarship award.

20 (a) Calculation of award.--The agency shall be responsible
21 for calculating the amount of each student's award, and each
22 award recipient shall receive a full-tuition scholarship or an
23 equivalent dollar scholarship to the eligible institution at
24 which the award recipient has been accepted for full-time
25 admission. The award may apply toward qualifying higher
26 education expenses, including tuition, books and fees of the
27 institution at which the award recipient has been accepted.

28 (b) Period of time before using scholarship.--Should an
29 award recipient decide to defer enrollment at the institution at
30 which the award recipient has been accepted because the award

1 recipient has enlisted in the military, the award recipient
2 shall have two years following discharge from active military
3 service in which to use the award.

4 Section 6. Renewal requirements.

5 (a) Agency.--The agency shall establish renewal eligibility
6 requirements. At a minimum, these requirements shall require the
7 maintenance of:

8 (1) Full-time enrollment at an eligible institution and
9 a minimum grade point average of 3.0 or higher on a scale of
10 4.0 or its equivalent.

11 (2) Satisfactory academic progress toward completion of
12 a course of study.

13 (b) Renewal period.--Each award is renewable annually for a
14 period not to exceed an additional three academic years beyond
15 the first year of the award, except for bona fide five-year
16 majors.

17 (c) Maintenance of requirements.--Upon receiving an award,
18 each award recipient shall enter into a written agreement with
19 the agency to:

20 (1) Satisfy all degree, diploma or certificate
21 requirements and other requirements under this act.

22 (2) Commence employment in this Commonwealth no later
23 than one year after completion of an approved bachelor's or
24 associate's degree or certificate program for a period of one
25 calendar year for each academic year during which the student
26 received an award, unless the agency determines that there
27 are extenuating circumstances, including approved medical or
28 personal leave of absence.

29 (3) Reimburse the Commonwealth all amounts received
30 under this act and interest thereon, as determined by the

agency, if the student fails to comply with paragraphs (1) and (2).

Section 7. Powers and duties of agency.--In addition to setting the criteria and procedures for the selection process and award renewals, the agency shall:

(1) Prepare and supervise the issuance of public information concerning the provisions of the award.

(2) Prescribe the form, set time limits and regulate the submission of applications from eligible high school students.

(3) Establish procedures for making the initial award to the recipients and for annual renewal of the awards.

(4) Disburse awards from funds specifically appropriated for the purposes of this act.

(5) Adopt rules and regulations to implement, administer and enforce this act.

Section 8. Financial aid.

(a) Exclusions from taxable income.--Awards received by an award recipient shall not be considered taxable income for purposes of Article III of the act of March 4, 1971 (P.L.6, No.2), known as the Tax Reform Code of 1971.

(b) Coordination of financial aid.--The agency shall determine when the amount of an award may exceed the cost of an education at the institution the award recipient is attending. If other student aid must be adjusted due to the receipt of funding under this act, loans must be reduced first, then work-study or other employment and then grant or scholarship aid.

(c) Eligible institutions unaffected.--An award may not be considered financial assistance or appropriations to the eligible institutions.

1 (d) Student aid.--An award may not be used by the agency
2 when determining an applicant's eligibility and need for student
3 grant programs or other student programs administered by the
4 agency.

5 Section 9. Pennsylvania Scholastic Achievement Award Fund.

6 (a) Establishment.--The agency shall establish and
7 administer a fund to be known as the Pennsylvania Scholastic
8 Achievement Award Fund. The purpose of the fund shall be to
9 provide full tuition scholarships or scholarships of an
10 equivalent dollar amount to students who have been selected in
11 accordance with this act.

12 (b) Acceptance of funds.--The fund may accept donations and
13 contributions from all public and private sources, including the
14 Federal Government and any appropriations by the General
15 Assembly.

16 (c) Issuance of awards.--Awards shall be made to the extent
17 that moneys are available in the fund.

18 Section 10. Effective date.

19 This act shall take effect in 90 days.