
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 2347 Session of
2000

INTRODUCED BY GRUCELA, SOLOBAY, WOJNAROSKI, LYNCH, HARHAI, GORDNER, COY, PESCI, COSTA, TANGRETTI, VAN HORNE, FAIRCHILD, CALTAGIRONE, SANTONI, KAISER, CURRY, ROONEY, HALUSKA, MANN, PETRARCA, READSHAW, MARKOSEK, DALLY, LaGROTTA, HERMAN, STABACK, WILT, RUFFING, CORRIGAN, LAUGHLIN, M. COHEN, LUCYK, BEBKO-JONES, SATHER, ROBERTS, KIRKLAND, SURRA, GEORGE, LEVDANSKY, WILLIAMS, PIPPY, WALKO, MELIO, HESS, THOMAS, WASHINGTON, YOUNGBLOOD, SHANER, SAINATO, TRICH, PLATTS, MUNDY, STEELMAN, DALEY, GEIST, BELFANTI, TRAVAGLIO, PISTELLA, BELARDI, BARRAR, McCALL, DeWEESE, ORIE, BLAUM, MAHER, LESCOVITZ, YUDICHAK, CASORIO, RAMOS, DAILEY, L. I. COHEN, TULLI, DeLUCA, McILHINNEY, ARGALL, HORSEY, FREEMAN AND SCRIMENTI, MARCH 15, 2000

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS, MARCH 15, 2000

AN ACT

1 Providing for a Postsecondary Education Tuition Reimbursement
2 Program for volunteer firefighters and emergency services
3 personnel.

4 The General Assembly finds that, since volunteer firefighters
5 and emergency services personnel provide essential public
6 services and save taxpayers billions of dollars annually in
7 communities across this Commonwealth, this act shall provide
8 significant assistance to them in attaining a quality
9 postsecondary education.

10 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
11 hereby enacts as follows:

12 Section 1. Short title.

1 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Volunteer
2 Firefighter and Emergency Services Postsecondary Education
3 Tuition Reimbursement Program Act.

4 Section 2. Definitions.

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

8 "Agency." The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance
9 Agency.

10 "Community colleges." Institutions now and hereafter created
11 pursuant to Article XIX-A of the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30,
12 No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, or the former
13 act of August 24, 1963 (P.L.1132, No.484), known as the
14 Community College Act of 1963.

15 "State-owned university." A university which is part of the
16 State System of Higher Education as established under Article
17 XX-A of the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the
18 Public School Code of 1949, and all branches and campuses of a
19 State-owned university.

20 "State-related universities." The Pennsylvania State
21 University, the University of Pittsburgh, Temple University and
22 Lincoln University and their branch campuses.

23 Section 3. Tuition assistance program.

24 (a) Establishment.--There is hereby established the
25 Volunteer Firefighter and Emergency Services Postsecondary
26 Education Tuition Reimbursement Program.

27 (b) Credits or payments.--The tuition reimbursement program
28 shall consist of a credit or payment by a community college,
29 State-owned university or State-related university of 50% of a
30 qualified student's share of tuition for each course credit,

1 with payment from the Commonwealth going directly to the
2 community college, State-owned university or State-related
3 university for such credits or payments.

4 (c) Qualifications.--Any applicant who meets the following
5 criteria shall be eligible for tuition assistance under this
6 act:

7 (1) The applicant must be a resident of this
8 Commonwealth.

9 (2) The applicant has successfully completed the
10 requirements for and has received certification as a
11 Firefighter I, II or III, Fire Officer I or II or Fire
12 Instructor I or II from the Pennsylvania Fire Academy or one
13 of its delegated authorities consistent with the National
14 Board of Professional Qualifications or the applicant is
15 certified as an Emergency Medical Technician by the
16 Department of Health as provided for in the act of July 3,
17 1985 (P.L.164, No.45), known as the Emergency Medical
18 Services Act.

19 (3) The applicant must provide the community college,
20 State-owned university or State-related university with a
21 sworn statement of fact by the fire chief, president or
22 commissioner of a volunteer fire department, nonprofit
23 ambulance service, nonprofit rescue squad or nonprofit
24 hazardous material response team, of which the applicant is a
25 volunteer, attesting that the applicant has participated in
26 at least 30% of the volunteer organization's emergency
27 responses within the last 18 months. A junior volunteer 16
28 through 18 years of age must have participated in at least
29 20% of the emergency responses and have attended at least 20
30 hours of training or classroom instruction on an annual

1 basis, as certified by the fire chief, president or
2 commissioner of the volunteer organization.

3 (4) The applicant must make an application to the agency
4 for any other financial assistance.

5 (d) Limitation.--No applicant shall be eligible for tuition
6 reimbursement under this act for more than five academic years.

7 Section 4. Reimbursement of tuition costs.

8 The agency shall reimburse the community college, State-owned
9 university or State-related university an amount equal to 50% of
10 the cost of a course credit for each course where tuition
11 reimbursement is granted pursuant to this act. The
12 reimbursements shall be verified by enrollment and itemized by
13 the applicant for auditing purposes under this act. The
14 reimbursements shall be made annually by the agency to the
15 appropriate community college, State-related university or
16 State-owned university.

17 Section 5. Funding.

18 The General Assembly shall annually include in the
19 appropriation to the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance
20 Agency in the General Appropriation Act an appropriation from
21 the General Fund in an amount sufficient to make tuition
22 reimbursement payments pursuant to this act.

23 Section 6. Regulations.

24 The agency shall in a manner provided by law promulgate rules
25 and regulations necessary to carry out this act.

26 Section 7. Effective date.

27 This act shall take effect July 1, 2000, or immediately,
28 whichever is later.