

---

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

---

HOUSE BILL

No. 375 Session of  
2015

---

INTRODUCED BY BURNS, BISHOP, KOTIK, KORTZ, READSHAW, DeLUCA,  
COHEN, MAHONEY, BOBACK, TALLMAN, GOODMAN, DEASY, MURT AND  
QUINN, FEBRUARY 9, 2015

---

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY  
PREPAREDNESS, FEBRUARY 9, 2015

---

AN ACT

1 Establishing a recruitment scholarship program for volunteer  
2 fire companies, volunteer ambulance services and volunteer  
3 rescue squads; providing for duties of the Pennsylvania  
4 Higher Education Assistance Agency; and making an  
5 appropriation.

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 Volunteer  
10 Recruitment Service Scholarship Act.

11 Section 2. Definitions.

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

15 "Agency." The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance  
16 Agency.

17 "Degree-producing curriculum." A series of courses  
18 programmed to culminate in a specific postsecondary degree or

1 diploma when successfully completed.

2 "Full-time study." Enrollment in an approved postsecondary  
3 degree program for at least 12 credit hours per semester or at  
4 least eight credit hours per quarter in an institution of higher  
5 education.

6 "Institution of higher education." An accredited  
7 postsecondary institution of higher education that provides a  
8 course of study leading to the granting of a postsecondary  
9 degree or diploma.

10 "Legal resident." A person whose principal domicile is  
11 located within this Commonwealth in excess of one year.

12 "Part-time study." Enrollment in an approved postsecondary  
13 degree program for at least six but less than 12 credit hours  
14 per semester or at least four but less than eight credit hours  
15 per quarter in an institution of higher education.

16 "Tuition." The total semester, quarter or credit hour cost  
17 of instruction to the student as periodically published in the  
18 catalog of the institution of higher education, excluding  
19 mandatory fees, book charges and room and board.

20 "Tuition benefit." The payment of whatever cost is  
21 attributable to the cost of tuition after the deduction of any  
22 other available educational grant aid, not to exceed an amount  
23 equal to the annual tuition charged by the State System of  
24 Higher Education.

25 "Volunteer ambulance service." A nonprofit chartered  
26 corporation, association or organization located in this  
27 Commonwealth and regularly engaged in the service of providing  
28 emergency medical care and transportation of patients.

29 "Volunteer fire company." A nonprofit chartered corporation,  
30 association or organization located in this Commonwealth that

1 provides fire protection services and may offer other voluntary  
2 emergency services within this Commonwealth. Voluntary emergency  
3 services may include voluntary ambulance and voluntary rescue  
4 services.

5 "Volunteer organization." A volunteer fire company,  
6 volunteer ambulance service or volunteer rescue squad.

7 "Volunteer rescue squad." A nonprofit chartered corporation,  
8 association or organization located in this Commonwealth that  
9 provides rescue services in this Commonwealth.

10 Section 3. Volunteer recruitment service scholarships.

11 (a) Program.--The agency is authorized, within amounts  
12 appropriated or otherwise lawfully available from any other  
13 source, to establish a recruitment scholarship program for  
14 volunteer organizations.

15 (b) Award.--Notwithstanding any law, rule or regulation to  
16 the contrary, the agency is authorized to grant, based upon  
17 available funding, volunteer recruitment service scholarships  
18 that shall be awarded in the following manner:

19 (1) Volunteer organizations may annually submit one  
20 application to the agency.

21 (2) Volunteer organizations submitting an application  
22 shall develop a policy for selecting the candidate that will  
23 be forwarded to the agency.

24 (3) The agency shall designate a date by which all  
25 applications shall be received by the agency.

26 (4) The agency shall award a volunteer recruitment  
27 service scholarship to all eligible applicants unless the  
28 number of applications received is greater than the funding  
29 available for the program, in which case the agency shall  
30 develop a random system for selecting the recipients.

(5) A recipient of the volunteer recruitment service scholarship shall automatically continue to receive the scholarship once awarded, provided that the recipient remains compliant with the provisions of this section, the recipient is continuously enrolled in a degree-producing curriculum at an institution of higher education and funding is available.

(6) The agency shall develop a system for certifying each semester or quarter that the recipient is compliant with the conditions enumerated in section 4 prior to receiving the tuition benefit.

#### Section 4. Qualifications.

Recipients of the volunteer recruitment service scholarships must:

(1) Have been a member of the volunteer organization for less than six months at the time of the initial award, provided that this paragraph shall not apply to any individual under 23 years of age.

(2) Maintain an active volunteer status, as determined by the volunteer organization, for the duration of the scholarship.

(3) Have graduated from high school or have received a high school equivalency diploma and may not possess a bachelor's degree or higher.

(4) Be enrolled in a degree-producing curriculum at an institution of higher education located within a 50-mile radius of the volunteer organization, or, provided that no such institution exists, the next closest institution.

(5) Maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.0.

(6) Be a legal resident of this Commonwealth.

1           (7) Apply for all other available Federal, State or  
2           other educational grant aid at the time of enrollment. Any  
3           grant aid or financial assistance received shall be utilized  
4           to offset the cost of tuition to the maximum extent possible,  
5           except that nothing shall require that aid or assistance  
6           received which may be used toward costs other than that of  
7           tuition shall be applied toward the cost of tuition.

8 Section 5. Use.

9           The tuition benefit provided by this act may be used for  
10          either part-time or full-time study.

11 Section 6. Discontinuance.

12          Upon the recipient's attainment of a bachelor's degree or  
13          cessation of status as a volunteer with the volunteer  
14          organization, whichever occurs first, the tuition benefit  
15          provided by this act shall be discontinued. The tuition benefit  
16          provided by this act shall be suspended at the direction of the  
17          agency for:

18               (1) A recipient's failure to continue to serve as a  
19               volunteer with the volunteer organization.

20               (2) The failure to maintain good academic progress and  
21               program pursuit.

22               (3) The failure to maintain sufficient academic standing  
23               to retain eligibility for any other financial assistance the  
24               recipient may be receiving.

25               (4) The failure to comply with any provision of this  
26               act.

27 Section 7. Limitations.

28          Unless otherwise provided for in this section, the tuition  
29          benefit for the volunteer recruitment service scholarships shall  
30          be on the terms and conditions set by the agency, provided that

1 any tuition benefit for:

2 (1) Full-time study shall not exceed an amount equal to  
3 the annual tuition charged to the recipient or the tuition  
4 charged by the State System of Higher Education, whichever is  
5 less.

6 (2) Part-time study shall not exceed an amount equal to  
7 the part-time tuition charged to the recipient or the per  
8 credit hour tuition charged by the State System of Higher  
9 Education multiplied by the number of credit hours taken,  
10 whichever is less.

11 Section 8. Regulations.

12 The agency may promulgate regulations necessary for the  
13 implementation of this act.

14 Section 9. Appropriation.

15 The sum of \$2,000,000, or as much thereof as may be  
16 necessary, is hereby appropriated to the Pennsylvania Higher  
17 Education Assistance Agency for the fiscal year July 1, 2015, to  
18 June 30, 2016, to carry out the purposes of this act.

19 Section 10. Effective date.

20 This act shall take effect in 60 days.