

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

H.B. 640
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Finance
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Engrossed

DIGEST

Peace officers serve and protect the citizens and communities of Texas. Due to the hazardous nature of their job, peace officers at times become permanently disabled in the line of duty and, in some cases, are unable to continue their employment as a peace officer. In these cases, an officer may not have the educational background or needed experience for obtaining employment in another field. A disabled peace officer may need to obtain the necessary education and background for beginning a new career by attending a college or university.

This bill would provide eligible disabled peace officers a tuition exemption to attend state-supported institutions of higher education.

PURPOSE

As proposed, H.B. 640 provides eligible disabled peace officers a tuition exemption to attend state-supported institutions of higher education.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 54D, Education Code, by adding Section 54.2041, as follows:

Sec. 54.2041. DISABLED PEACE OFFICER. (a) Authorizes the governing board of an institution of higher education to exempt a student from the payment of tuition and required fees authorized by this chapter for a course for which space is available if the student meets certain qualifications.

(b) Prohibits a person from receiving an exemption under this section for more than 12 semesters or while the person is enrolled in an undergraduate program or while the person is attending only undergraduate courses.

(c) Prohibits a person from receiving an exemption under this section if the person is enrolled in a master's degree program or is attending postgraduate courses to meet the requirements of a master's degree program and the person has previously received a master's degree and received an exemption under this section for a semester or session while attending a postgraduate course to meet the requirements of the master's degree program.

(d) Prohibits a person from receiving an exemption under this section if the person is enrolled in a doctoral degree program or is attending postgraduate courses to meet the requirements of a doctoral degree and the person has previously received a doctoral degree and received an exemption under this section for a semester or session while attending a postgraduate course to meet the requirements of the doctoral degree program.

(e) Requires a person to apply for an exemption in the manner provided by the governing board of the institution. Requires the governing board to require an applicant for an exemption to submit satisfactory evidence that the applicant is eligible for the exemption.

(f) Requires the legislature, in an appropriations act, to account for the rates of tuition and fees authorized by Subsection (a) in a way that does not increase the general revenue appropriations to that institution.

(g) Defines "injury suffered during the performance of a duty as a peace officer."

(h) Sets forth the conditions under which a peace officer is considered permanently disabled for the purpose of this section.

SECTION 2. Provides that this Act applies beginning with tuition and required fees imposed for the fall semester of 1997.

SECTION 3. Emergency clause.

Effective date: upon passage.