

2015 Regular Session

SENATE BILL NO. 48

BY SENATORS DONAHUE AND APPEL

Prefiled pursuant to Article III, Section 2(A)(4)(b)(i) of the Constitution of Louisiana.

TOPS. Provides relative to the minimum ACT score for TOPS eligibility and TOPS award amounts. (gov sig)

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AN ACT

To amend and reenact R.S. 17:3048.1(A)(1)(b)(i) and to enact R.S. 17:3048.1(Z), relative to the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students; to provide relative to the minimum American College Test score required for eligibility for the Opportunity award; to provide with respect to the monetary amounts for awards granted pursuant to the program; to provide relative to future increases in award amounts; to provide for effectiveness; and to provide for related matters.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

Section 1. R.S. 17:3048.1(A)(1)(b)(i) is hereby amended and reenacted and R.S. 17:3048.1(Z) is hereby enacted to read as follows:

§3048.1. Program awards; eligibility; amounts; limitations; funding; administration

A.(1) As part of the Louisiana Taylor Opportunity Program for Students, the state shall financially assist any student who enrolls on a full-time basis in a public college or university in this state or a regionally accredited independent college or university in the state that is a member of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, hereafter in this Chapter referred to collectively as "eligible colleges or universities", to pursue an academic undergraduate degree or,

1 as provided by this Subsection, skill or occupational training as defined by the  
2 administering agency including a vocational or technical education certificate or  
3 diploma program or a nonacademic undergraduate degree, and who meets the  
4 qualifications of Subparagraph (b), (c), or (d) of this Paragraph and all of the  
5 applicable following qualifications:

6 (a) \* \* \*

7 (b)(i) Has been certified as provided in Subsection D of this Section to have  
8 graduated from a public high school or a nonpublic high school which has been  
9 approved by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, has a  
10 minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.50 calculated on a 4.00 scale, has a  
11 composite score on the 1990 version of the American College Test which is at least  
12 equal to or higher than the state's average composite score, ~~rounded to the nearest~~  
13 ~~whole number~~, **expressed in whole number increments**, reported for the prior year,  
14 but never less than twenty, or an equivalent concordant value on an enhanced or  
15 revised version of such test or on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, and, unless granted  
16 an exception for cause by the administering agency, has enrolled in an eligible  
17 college or university as a first-time freshman not later than the semester, excluding  
18 summer semesters or sessions, immediately following the first anniversary of the  
19 date that the student graduated from high school or, if the student joins the United  
20 States Armed Forces within one year after graduating from high school, has enrolled  
21 in an eligible college or university as a first-time freshman not later than the  
22 semester, excluding summer semesters or sessions, immediately following the fifth  
23 anniversary of the date that the student graduated from high school; however,  
24 effective for the 1996-1997 school year and thereafter, if, on or prior to the fifth  
25 anniversary of the date that the student graduated from high school, the student  
26 reenlists in the United States Armed Forces and maintains continuous active duty,  
27 the five-year period shall be extended to the semester immediately following the  
28 one-year anniversary of the student's separation from active duty service. As  
29 distinguished from all other students qualifying for this program, a student who

1 meets the requirements of this Subparagraph shall be the recipient of an  
2 "Opportunity Award" for the purposes of this program.

3 \* \* \*

4 **Z.(1) Notwithstanding any provision of this Chapter to the contrary,**  
5 **beginning with the 2016-2017 award year, the amount awarded by the state to**  
6 **a student who is the recipient of any award granted pursuant to this Chapter**  
7 **shall be equal to the award amount paid for the 2015-2016 award year.**

8 **(2)(a) Beginning with the 2016-2017 award year, the legislature may, by**  
9 **law, increase the amount awarded by the state in any given award year to a**  
10 **student who is the recipient of any award granted pursuant to this Chapter.**

11 **(b) Any increase in award amounts granted by the legislature pursuant**  
12 **to this Paragraph shall be established as the minimum amount to be awarded**  
13 **to a student who is the recipient of any award granted pursuant to this Chapter.**

14 **(c) In no case shall the amount awarded to a student who is the recipient**  
15 **of any award pursuant to this Chapter be less than the amount paid for the**  
16 **previous award year.**

17 **(3) The award amounts as provided in this Subsection shall be exclusive**  
18 **of any additional amounts awarded to students who receive a Performance**  
19 **Award or an Honors Award.**

20 Section 2. This Act shall become effective upon signature by the governor or, if not  
21 signed by the governor, upon expiration of the time for bills to become law without signature  
22 by the governor, as provided by Article III, Section 18 of the Constitution of Louisiana. If  
23 vetoed by the governor and subsequently approved by the legislature, this Act shall become  
24 effective on the day following such approval.

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The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part  
of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Jeanne C. Johnston.

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With respect to the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS), present law provides that a student, among other eligibility criteria, must have a composite ACT score equal to or higher than the state average composite score, rounded to the nearest whole number,

reported for the previous year, but never less than 20 or an equivalent value on the SAT in order to receive a TOPS Opportunity award.

Proposed law retains the requirement that a student have a minimum ACT score equal to or greater than the state average, but never less than 20, but specifies that the state average be expressed in whole number increments.

Present law provides as follows relative to the amount awarded to TOPS recipients of Opportunity, Performance, or Honors awards:

- (1) For a recipient who attends a La. public college or university to pursue an academic undergraduate degree or skill or occupational training, the award amount is an amount determined by the La. Student Financial Assistance Commission (LASFAC) to equal the tuition charged by the college or university attended.
- (2) For a recipient who attends an eligible state nonpublic college or university, the award amount is an amount determined by LASFAC to equal the weighted average amount of amounts paid for students attending public colleges and universities that offer academic undergraduate degrees at the baccalaureate level or an amount determined by LASFAC to equal the weighted average of amounts paid for students attending public colleges and universities who are enrolled in permitted skill or occupational training.
- (3) For a recipient who is eligible to use the award at an out-of-state nonpublic college or university to pursue an academic undergraduate degree, the award amount is an amount determined by LASFAC to equal the weighted average of amounts paid for students attending La. public colleges and universities that offer academic undergraduate degrees.
- (4) For a student who is the recipient of an Opportunity, Performance, or Honors award who enrolls in a cosmetology school registered by the La. State Board of Cosmetology or a proprietary school licensed by the Board of Regents, the award amount is equal to the amount determined by the LASFAC to equal the weighted average of amounts for students attending public colleges and universities who are enrolled in the permitted skill or occupational training.
- (5) Provides an additional \$200 per semester, or \$400 per academic year, to a recipient of a Performance Award, and provides an additional \$400 per semester, or \$800 per academic year, to a recipient of an Honors Award.

Relative to the amount of a TOPS-Tech Award, present law provides as follows:

- (1) For a recipient who attends an eligible La. public college or university that does not offer an academic undergraduate degree at the baccalaureate level or higher to pursue permitted skill or occupational training, the award amount equals the actual cost of tuition.
- (2) For a recipient who attends any other eligible postsecondary education institution, the award amount equals the amount determined by LASFAC to equal the weighted average of amounts paid for students attending public institutions who are enrolled in the permitted skill or occupational training.

Proposed law provides that, beginning with the 2016-2017 award year:

- (1) The amount awarded by the state to a student who is the recipient of any TOPS award shall be equal to the award amount established for each respective award for the 2015-2016 award year.

- (2) The legislature may, by law, increase the amount awarded in any given award year to a student who is the recipient of any TOPS award.
- (3) Any increase in award amounts granted by the legislature shall be established as the minimum amount to be awarded to a student who is the recipient of any TOPS award.
- (4) The amount awarded to a student who is the recipient of any TOPS award shall not be less than the amount paid for the previous award year.
- (5) Retains payment of the supplemental amounts established in present law for a recipient of a Performance or Honors award.

Effective upon signature of the governor or lapse of time for gubernatorial action.

(Amends R.S. 17:3048.1(A)(1)(b)(i); adds R.S. 17:3048.1(Z))