

RÉSUMÉ DIGEST

SB 48

2015 Regular Session

Donahue

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 would have retained the requirement that a student have a minimum ACT score equal to or greater than the state average, truncated to a whole number, but never less than 20.

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 would have provided 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 at the

postsecondary institution in which the student is enrolled for the 2015-2016 award year.

- (2) The legislature may, by law, increase the amount awarded at a postsecondary institution in any given award year to a student who is the recipient of any TOPS award.
- (3) Any increase in award amounts at a postsecondary institution 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, subject to any limitations on award amounts otherwise imposed by present law.
- (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 at the postsecondary institution in which the student is enrolled, subject to any limitations on award amounts otherwise imposed by present law.
- (5) Retains payment of the supplemental amounts established in present law for a recipient of a Performance or Honors award.

Proposed law would have superceded and controlled in the case of any conflict between the provisions of proposed law and those of the Act originating as HB 705 of the 2015 RS.

Would have become effective upon signature of the governor.

(Would have amended R.S. 17:3048.1(A)(1)(b)(i); added R.S. 17:3048.1(Z), 5002(A), (B), and (D), and 5024(B)(1)(a))

VETO MESSAGE: "Senate Bill No. 48 caps funding for the TOPS scholarship program. I made a promise to the students and families of this state that a TOPS scholarship would be available to every child who worked hard and met the performance criteria established by law – this legislation would renege on that promise. Every year, 34.4 percent of Louisiana first-time freshmen who attend college in Louisiana do so with a TOPS scholarship. Since TOPS was created, it has aided our state by sending nearly half a million students to college who may otherwise not have been able to go.

TOPS has been a great investment for the state:

- It has increased ACT scores, an indicator of college readiness. TOPS recipients' average score is 21.4, while non-TOPS recipients average 16.7.
- Only 43% of freshmen, who meet the high school course requirements for TOPS, require remediation, but 89% of freshmen who do not meet those course requirements, need remediation.
- TOPS has increased college student retention rates from first to second year and second to third year. While 89% of TOPS' recipients continue to their sophomore year, 72% of non-TOPS' recipients do. The disparity is even larger between sophomore and junior year: 82% of TOPS' recipients continue compared to 61% of non-TOPS recipients.
- Finally, TOPS encourages students to graduate. Sixty-two percent of TOPS recipients finish at four-year universities in six years versus only 32% of students who do not receive TOPS.

For these reasons, I have vetoed Senate Bill No. 48 and hereby return it to the Senate."