

2016 Regular Session

SENATE BILL NO. 174

BY SENATOR DONAHUE

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

1 AN ACT

2 To amend and reenact R.S. 17:5002(A), (B) and (D), and 5024(B)(1)(a), relative to the
3 Taylor Opportunity Program for Students; to provide relative to the minimum
4 American College Test score required for eligibility for the Opportunity award; to
5 provide with respect to the monetary amounts for awards granted pursuant to the
6 program; to provide relative to future increases in award amounts; and to provide for
7 related matters.

8 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

9 Section 1. R.S. 17:5002(A), (B) and (D), and 5024(B)(1)(a) are hereby amended and
10 reenacted to read as follows:

11 §5002. Awards and amounts

12 A. **(1)** A student shall be eligible for an Opportunity, Performance, Honors,
13 or TOPS-Tech Award based on his academic achievement.

14 **(2) The award amount as provided for in Subsection B or D of this**
15 **Section to a student enrolled in any given institution shall be equal to the award**
16 **amount paid for a student at that institution during the 2016-2017 academic**
17 **year unless the legislature, by law, increases the award amount.**

1 B. Any student who is eligible for an Opportunity, Performance, or Honors
2 Award pursuant to this Chapter and who has enrolled:

3 (1) In any public college or university in this state, shall be awarded by the
4 state an amount determined by the administering agency to equal the tuition charged
5 by the public college or university **during the 2016-2017 academic year.**

6 (2) At any regionally accredited independent college or university in the state
7 which is a member of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and
8 Universities to pursue an academic undergraduate degree, shall be awarded by the
9 state an amount to be determined by the administering agency to equal the weighted
10 average of amounts paid under this Section for students attending public colleges and
11 universities that offer academic undergraduate degrees at the baccalaureate level
12 **during the 2016-2017 academic year.**

13 (3) In a school that has a valid and current certificate of registration issued
14 by the Louisiana State Board of Cosmetology in accordance with law and that is
15 accredited by an accrediting organization recognized by the United States
16 Department of Education or in any proprietary school that has a valid and current
17 license issued by the Board of Regents in accordance with law and that is accredited
18 by an accrediting organization recognized by the United States Department of
19 Education, shall be awarded by the state an amount determined by the administering
20 agency to equal the weighted average of amounts paid under this Section for students
21 attending public colleges and universities **during the 2016-2017 academic year and**
22 **who are enrolled in the permitted skill or occupational training, as may be applicable.**

23 (4) In an out-of-state college or university that is specifically designed to
24 accommodate deaf and hard-of-hearing students under R.S. 17:5027(C), shall be
25 awarded an amount determined by the administering agency to equal the weighted
26 average of amounts paid under this Section for students attending Louisiana public
27 colleges and universities that offer academic undergraduate degrees **during the**
28 **2016-2017 academic year.**

29 * * *

1 D.(1) Except as otherwise provided in this Subsection, a student who is
2 eligible for a TOPS-Tech Award pursuant to this Chapter and who is enrolled:

3 (a) In an eligible public college or university that does not offer an academic
4 undergraduate degree at the baccalaureate level in those associate's degree or other
5 shorter-term training and education programs that are aligned to state workforce
6 priorities as determined by the Board of Regents and the Louisiana Workforce
7 Investment Council shall be awarded by the state an amount determined by the
8 administering agency to equal the tuition charged by the college or university **during**
9 **the 2016-2017 academic year**. If the Board of Regents and the Louisiana Workforce
10 Investment Council determine that a program is no longer aligned with those
11 priorities, an otherwise eligible student who had previously received an award and
12 enrolled in that program may continue to use the award.

13 (b) In an eligible college or university other than as provided for in
14 Subparagraph (a) of this Paragraph in those associate's degree or other shorter-term
15 training education programs that are aligned to state workforce priorities as
16 determined by the Board of Regents and the Louisiana Workforce Investment
17 Council shall be awarded by the state an amount determined by the administering
18 agency to equal the weighted average of amounts paid to students attending an
19 eligible public college or university that does not offer an academic undergraduate
20 degree at the baccalaureate level **during the 2016-2017 academic year**. If the Board
21 of Regents and the Louisiana Workforce Investment Council determine that a
22 program is no longer aligned with those priorities, an otherwise eligible student who
23 had previously received an award and enrolled in that program may continue to use
24 the award.

25 (2) A student who graduated prior to the 2016-2017 school year, who is
26 eligible for a TOPS-Tech Award pursuant to this Chapter, and who is enrolled:

27 (a) In an eligible college or university that does not offer an academic
28 undergraduate degree at the baccalaureate level shall be awarded by the state an
29 amount determined by the administering agency to equal the tuition charged by the

1 college or university **during the 2016-2017 academic year.**

2 (b) In an eligible college or university other than as provided for in
3 Subparagraph (a) of this Paragraph shall be awarded by the state an amount
4 determined by the administering agency to equal the weighted average of amounts
5 paid to students attending an eligible public college or university that does not offer
6 an academic undergraduate degree at the baccalaureate level **during the 2016-2017**
7 **academic year.**

8 * * *

9 §5024. Academic requirements

10 * * *

11 B.(1) Except as otherwise provided by this Subsection, a student shall earn
12 the following minimum test scores for the respective awards:

13 (a) For an Opportunity Award, a composite score on the 1990 version of the
14 ACT which is at least equal to or higher than the state's average composite score,
15 ~~rounded to the nearest~~ **truncated to a** whole number, reported for the prior year but
16 never less than twenty or an equivalent concordant value on an enhanced or revised
17 version of such test or on the SAT.

18 * * *

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

The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part
of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Linda Nugent.

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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, 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 provides that, beginning with the 2017-2018 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 2016-2017 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.

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

(Amends R.S. 17:5002(A), (B) and (D), and 5024(B)(1)(a))