

GREEN SHEET REDIGEST

HB 77

2025 Regular Session

Turner

TOPS: Adds the Excellence award level for students who score 31 or higher on the ACT, allows award qualification based on the Classic Learning Test, revises eligibility requirements for TOPS-Tech, and allows application of unused award amounts to medical or dental school

DIGEST

TOPS award levels

Present law provides for the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS), a merit scholarship program. Provides for four award levels based on high school academic criteria, including completion of a specific core curriculum, a minimum GPA on that core curriculum, and a minimum ACT score: TOPS-Tech, Opportunity, Performance, and Honors, which is the highest award level for students who score a 27 or higher on the ACT. Proposed law creates Excellence, a new award level, for students who score 31 or higher on the ACT and enroll in a public college or university.

Award amounts

Present law ties the calculation of award amounts to the amount of tuition charged at a given institution during the 2016-2017 academic year. Proposed law retains present law except provides that for the Excellence award the award amount is \$12,000 or the amount of tuition and mandatory fees, whichever is less.

Proposed law provides for an Excellence Award for eligible students enrolled in any independent college or university in Louisiana, to be awarded by the state either an amount determined by the administering agency equal to the tuition charged by the independent college or university or \$8,500, whichever is less. The independent college or university must be a member of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities and be accredited by an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. States Department of Education.

Award qualification

Present law sets a minimum ACT score for each award level and allows qualification upon attainment of an equivalent concordant score on the SAT. Proposed law, applicable to graduates of approved nonpublic schools and approved home study programs, also allows this upon the attainment of an equivalent concordant score on the Classic Learning Test.

National Guard stipends

Present law provides that students who qualify for both TOPS and a National Guard tuition exemption as provided in present law receive the latter tuition exemption but also receive a stipend based on the TOPS award level for which they qualify. Proposed law adds a higher stipend for these students who qualify for an Excellence award.

(Amends R.S. 17:5002(A), (E)(1) and (3), and (G), 5025(intro. para.), 5029(B)(3)(b)(ii) and (iii) and (D)(1)(intro. para.), 5041(intro. para.), (1)(c), and (4), and 5043(1); Adds R.S. 17:5002(I), and 5024(A)(1)(e), and (B)(1)(e) and (3))

Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

The Committee Amendments Proposed by House Committee on Education to the original bill:

1. Lower amount of Excellence award at public institutions from \$12,000 to \$11,300.

2. Provide a stipend of \$350 per semester / \$700 per academic year for students who qualify for an Opportunity, Performance, Honors, or Excellence Award and are enrolled at LSU-Baton Rouge or LSU Health Sciences Center-New Orleans.

The Committee Amendments Proposed by House Committee on Appropriations to the engrossed bill:

1. Reinstate present law award amounts and present law stipends for Performance and Honors awards.
2. Increase maximum Excellence award amount from \$11,300 to \$12,000 and limit use of this award to public institutions.
3. Remove proposed law stipends for students at certain LSU institutions.
4. For a TOPS-Tech award, add the attainment of certain dual enrollment credits as an eligibility criterion in lieu of either the core curriculum or the minimum ACT score.

The House Floor Amendments to the reengrossed bill:

1. Allow award qualification based on a minimum score on the Classic Learning Test for graduates of approved nonpublic schools and approved home study programs.
2. Authorize certain students to apply unused award amounts to medical or dental school and require repayment unless certain conditions are met.

Summary of Amendments Adopted by Senate

Committee Amendments Proposed by Senate Committee on Education to the re-engrossed bill

1. Make technical changes.
2. Increase Opportunity award amounts for statewide universities at which the Opportunity award amount is less than 55% of the amount of tuition and mandatory fees charged by the university to an amount equal to 60% of tuition and mandatory fees.
3. Remove students who have earned an academic baccalaureate degree from an in-state college from applying unused award amounts to medical or dental school.
4. Remove reference to home study students.

Summary of Amendments Adopted by Senate

Committee Amendments Proposed by Senate Committee on Finance to the re-engrossed bill

1. Provide for an Excellence Award for eligible students enrolled in any independent college or university in Louisiana, to be awarded by the state either an amount determined by the administering agency equal to the tuition charged by the independent college or university or \$8,500, whichever is less.
2. Remove provisions allowing students to apply unused award amounts to postgraduate study if they are enrolled in certain medical or dental school programs.
3. Remove provisions relative to additional academic criteria for a TOPS-Tech award.
4. Makes technical changes.

