## SLS 20RS-577

## ORIGINAL

2020 Regular Session

SENATE BILL NO. 318

BY SENATOR CATHEY

TOPS. Provides for TOPS-Tech award eligibility for certain military veterans. (gov sig)

1	AN ACT
2	To enact R.S. 17:5029(E), relative to the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students; to
3	provide for eligibility for certain military veterans to receive a TOPS-Tech Award;
4	to provide relative to eligibility requirements; to require repayment of award
5	amounts under certain circumstances; and to provide for related matters.
6	Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:
7	Section 1. R.S. 17:5029(E) is hereby enacted to read as follows:
8	§5029. Alternative initial eligibility requirements
9	* * *
10	<b>E.(1)</b> Notwithstanding the initial eligibility requirements established by
11	this Chapter, effective for the 2020-2021 academic year and thereafter, an
12	individual who has been honorably discharged from a branch of the United
13	States Armed Forces shall be eligible to receive a TOPS-Tech Award, provided
14	he meets all of the following requirements:
15	(a) Had at least three years of military service prior to discharge.
16	(b) Is a citizen of the United States.
17	(c) Established Louisiana residency within one year after discharge from

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1	military service.
2	(d) Earned a 17 or higher score on the ACT or an equivalent concordant
3	value on the SAT, or attained a silver level score or higher on the ACT
4	WorkKeys system of assessments.
5	(e) Enrolls in an eligible college or university within one year after
6	notification of eligibility for the award.
7	(2) An individual who is determined eligible for and receives a
8	TOPS-Tech Award pursuant to this Subsection shall be subject to all other
9	provisions of this Chapter relative to the award and the rules and regulations
10	adopted by the administering agency.
11	(3)(a) An individual who receives a TOPS-Tech Award pursuant to this
12	Subsection shall repay all award amounts paid to a postsecondary education
13	institution on his behalf if he fails to meet the requirements provided in R.S.
14	5042 relative to maintaining eligibility or fails to complete the academic degree
15	or the skill or occupational training he is pursuing within the timeframe
16	provided for his award in R.S. 17:5002(E).
17	(b)The administering agency shall promulgate rules necessary to
18	implement the provisions of this Paragraph. The rules shall include the
19	<u>following:</u>
20	(i) Provision for all available means of collecting amounts owed and
21	interest on unpaid amounts.
22	(ii) Provision for circumstances under which a student shall be excepted
23	from the repayment requirements provided in this Paragraph. Such rules shall
24	provide for the definition, certification requirements, and maximum duration
25	of such circumstances, which shall be limited to the following:
26	(aa) Permanent disability.
27	(bb) Military service.

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

SB 31	l 8 Orig	oinal

## DIGEST 2020 Regular Session

Cathey

<u>Present law</u> provides for Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) as a program of merit scholarships for students attending certain postsecondary educational institutions who meet specific initial eligibility requirements pertaining to grade point average (GPA), ACT score, and core curriculum requirements and certain other qualifications. The initial award eligibility for a TOPS-Tech Award requires a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.5 on the core curriculum and a minimum ACT score of 17 or attainment of a silver level score on the ACT WorkKeys system of assessments. <u>Present law</u> further requires the recipient to be a La. resident and a U.S. citizen, and generally requires the student to enroll in an eligible postsecondary institution within one year of graduating from high school.

<u>Proposed law</u> provides for alternative initial eligibility requirements for veterans who were honorably discharged from the United States Armed Forces as follows:

- (1) Had at least three years of military service prior to discharge.
- (2) Is a citizen of the United States.
- (3) Established Louisiana residency within one year after discharge from military service.
- (4) Earned a 17 or higher score on the ACT or an equivalent concordant value on the SAT, or attained a silver level score or higher on the ACT WorkKeys system of assessments.
- (5) Enrolls in an eligible college or university within one year after notification of eligibility for the award.

<u>Present law</u> limits the duration of a student's tuition payment to two years for a TOPS-Tech Award. Requires that students meet certain requirements during these time frames in order to maintain continued eligibility. Such requirements include but are not limited to:

- (1) Making steady academic progress while earning enough credits to maintain full-time status.
- (2) Maintaining a minimum required grade point average, depending on the type of award received.
- (3) Having no criminal conviction, except for misdemeanor traffic violations.

<u>Proposed law</u> retains <u>present law</u> and additionally requires any student who fails to meet the requirements for maintaining eligibility or fails to complete his academic degree or skill or occupational training within the time frames specified in <u>present law</u> to repay all award amounts paid to a postsecondary education on his behalf.

<u>Proposed law</u> requires the administering agency (the Board of Regents) to promulgate rules necessary to implement <u>proposed law</u>, including provisions for the following:

- (1) Collecting amounts owed and interest on unpaid amounts.
- (2) Circumstances under which a student shall be excepted from the proposed law repayment requirements. Requires that these rules provide for the definition,

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certification requirements, and maximum duration of these circumstances, which shall be limited to permanent disability and military service.

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

(Adds R.S. 17:5029(E))