



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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January 20, 1998

TO: Members
Joint Committee on Finance

FROM: Bob Lang, Director

SUBJECT: Senate Bill 271: Fee Remissions for Certain University and Technical College Students

Senate Bill 271 was introduced on August 14, 1997, and referred to the Senate Committee on Education. On September 24, 1997, that Committee recommended passage of SB 271 on a vote of 7 to 0, and the bill was referred to the Joint Committee on Finance.

BACKGROUND

Current law requires the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin (UW) System to grant full remission of fees (resident tuition and student segregated fees) to any resident undergraduate student who is enrolled in a bachelor's degree program and who is the child of a correctional officer, fire fighter or law enforcement officer who was killed in the line of duty in this state.

Similarly, the board of a Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) district is required to grant full remission of program fees (resident tuition) to any resident undergraduate student who is enrolled in a college parallel, associate of arts degree or vocational diploma program, and who is the child of a fire fighter or law enforcement officer who was killed in the line of duty in this state.

In either case, in order to be eligible to receive the remission, the child must have been under the age of 21 or not yet born when his or her parent was killed.

The remissions, which were established in 1995 Act 228, are funded through separate annual appropriations within the UW System and WTCS. Since 1996-97, the first year of the

remissions, \$15,000 GPR annually has been provided in each of the appropriations. The statutes specify that if the amount appropriated in any fiscal year is insufficient to fully fund the fee remissions, the applicable entity (the Board of Regents or the WTCS district board) would be required to notify the Joint Committee on Finance.

SUMMARY OF BILL

Senate Bill 271 would expand the current fee remissions by requiring the UW Board of Regents and a WTCS district board to grant full remission of fees to the surviving spouse of a correctional officer, fire fighter or law enforcement officer who was killed in the line of duty in this state. To be eligible to receive the remission, the surviving spouse would have to be enrolled in a bachelor's degree program at a UW institution or in a college parallel, associate of arts degree or vocational diploma program at a WTCS institution.

In addition, the Bill would modify the current remission requirement by including children of slain correctional officers who attend WTCS institutions in the category of students eligible for the remissions. While children of slain correctional officers who attend UW institutions have been included since the establishment of the remission requirement in 1995 Act 228, similar students enrolled at technical colleges were inadvertently omitted from Act 228.

FISCAL EFFECT

SB 271 would increase the number of persons who would be eligible to receive fee remissions at both UW institutions and technical colleges, and therefore could result in increased expenditures from the appropriations from which the remissions are paid. Since it is not known how many, if any, of the newly-eligible individuals would choose to enroll, the actual fiscal impact of the bill cannot be determined.

Under current law, the Board of Regents or a WTCS district board is required to notify the Joint Committee on Finance if the amount appropriated in any fiscal year is insufficient to fully fund the remissions. The Committee, however, is not obligated to provide additional funds in such a case. If there is insufficient GPR funding available, tuition revenues for the underlying institutions would be reduced. Under current law, total expenditures for 1997-98 are estimated at \$6,000 from the University's \$15,000 GPR annual appropriation and \$12,000 from the \$15,000 GPR annual appropriation for WTCS.

SB 271 would not increase the amounts appropriated for the fee remissions. If additional students seek remissions as a result of the expanded eligibility under the bill, the amount appropriated, particularly for WTCS students, may not be sufficient to fully fund remissions in the future. Based on 1997-98 WTCS tuition rates, the current appropriation of \$15,000 GPR should be sufficient to fund approximately nine full-time associate degree or vocational diploma candidates or approximately seven full-time college parallel students. Remissions totalling \$6,360

were granted to four students for the 1996-97 academic year. For the Fall, 1997, semester, two students received remissions totalling \$5,779.

The total value of these remissions was higher than the actual program fees (tuition) charged because WTCS inadvertently reimbursed a district for material fees as well as program fees. In addition to tuition, all WTCS students are required to pay material fees for each course taken. While the Board of Regents is required to remit tuition and fees for eligible UW students, current law refers only to the remission of program fees (tuition) for WTCS students.

The UW System does not collect data on the number of students who receive remissions under the current law provisions. However, UW System Administration staff indicate that based on average tuition and fees of \$2,861 for a full-time student for the 1997-98 academic year, the current appropriation amount would fund approximately five UW students per year. In 1996-97, the total value of tuition and fees remitted to UW students was \$7,227. For the first semester of the 1997-98 academic year, these remissions totalled \$2,924.

Prepared by: Merry Larsen

passage of bill as amended

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	DECKER	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	N A
1	JAUCH	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	N A
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