

SENATE, No. 2855

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
221st LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MARCH 4, 2024

Sponsored by:

Senator LINDA R. GREENSTEIN

District 14 (Mercer and Middlesex)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senator Cruz-Perez

SYNOPSIS

Extends eligibility for Military Dependents Scholarships to students enrolled in approved career and technical education programs and to dependents of certain military members who served in Operation Freedom's Sentinel and Operation Inherent Resolve.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/13/2024)

1 AN ACT concerning scholarships for military dependents and
2 amending P.L.2015, c.117.

3

4 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
5 of New Jersey:

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7 1. Section 3 of P.L.2015, c.117 (C.18A:71B-100) is amended to
8 read as follows:

9 3. a. The board of trustees of the Military Dependents
10 Scholarship Fund shall consist of the State Adjutant General, or a
11 designee, the State Treasurer, or a designee, the executive director
12 of the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority, or a
13 designee, the Secretary of Higher Education, or a designee, and nine
14 public members appointed as follows: two by the President of the
15 Senate, who shall not be of the same political party, two by the
16 Speaker of the General Assembly, who shall not be of the same
17 political party, and five by the Governor, with the advice and
18 consent of the Senate, no more than three of whom shall be of the
19 same political party. At least five of the public members shall be
20 persons who were directly affected by Operation Noble Eagle,
21 Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation
22 Freedom's Sentinel, Operation Inherent Resolve, or Operation New
23 Dawn. Two of the public members shall be named by the Governor
24 to serve as co-chairpersons of the board.

25 b. Each public member of the board shall serve for a term of
26 three years and until a successor shall have been appointed and
27 qualified; except that of the first members appointed, two shall
28 serve for one year, three shall serve for two years and four shall
29 serve for three years. Any vacancy in the membership of the board
30 shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment for
31 the remainder of the unexpired term.

32 c. Members of the board shall serve without compensation.
33 Reasonable expenses of the board shall be paid out of the fund
34 proceeds, subject to approval by the State Treasurer.

35 d. The board shall have the following duties and
36 responsibilities:

37 (1) determine eligibility for a scholarship from the fund;

38 (2) determine the amount of each scholarship award;

39 (3) report annually to the Governor and the Legislature on the
40 performance of its duties in accordance with the provisions of this
41 act;

42 (4) solicit and raise private funds to finance the Military
43 Dependents Scholarship program; and

**EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is
not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.**

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

1 (5) receive and disburse such contributions to the fund as maybe
2 forthcoming from private and public sources.

3 (cf: P.L.2015, c.117, s.3)

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5 2. Section 4 of P.L.2015, c.117 (C.18A:71B-101) is amended to
6 read as follows:

7 4. a. The board of trustees is authorized to award scholarships
8 from the fund for the costs of undergraduate study at a public or
9 independent institution of higher education or for the costs of
10 attending a career and technical education program approved by the
11 board to the spouse, child, or other eligible dependent of a New
12 Jersey resident who is killed, officially listed as "Missing in Action"
13 by the United States Department of Defense, or totally and
14 permanently disabled as certified by the United States Department
15 of Veterans Affairs as a consequence of Operation Noble Eagle,
16 Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation
17 Freedom's Sentinel, Operation Inherent Resolve, or Operation New
18 Dawn.

19 b. Scholarships from the fund may be awarded annually upon
20 proper application by any student who qualifies under the criteria
21 established by the authority.

22 (cf: P.L.2015, c.117, s.4)

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24 3. Section 5 of P.L.2015, c.117 (C.18A:71B-102) is amended to
25 read as follows:

26 5. a. A Military Dependents Scholarship shall not be awarded to
27 an applicant unless the applicant has demonstrated to the
28 satisfaction of the board that the applicant:

29 (1) will be or is enrolled in a full-time undergraduate program of
30 study leading to a degree at an institution of higher education , or
31 will be or is enrolled in a career and technical education program
32 approved by the board of trustees of the Military Dependents
33 Scholarship Fund; and

34 (2) has complied with all rules and regulations adopted pursuant
35 to this act for the award, regulation and administration of
36 scholarships from the fund.

37 b. Eligibility for a Military **【Survivors】** Dependents
38 Scholarship, in the case of a spouse or other eligible dependent,
39 shall be limited to a period of **【15】** 21 years from the date of death
40 of the person, the date the person is officially listed as "Missing in
41 Action" or the date upon which the person is certified to have been
42 totally and permanently disabled for initial receipt of the benefits
43 under the program. In the case of a dependent child, eligibility
44 shall be limited to a period of eight years following graduation from
45 high school.

46 (cf: P.L.2015, c.117, s.5)

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48 4. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

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This bill extends eligibility for Military Dependents Scholarships to students enrolled in approved career and technical education programs and to dependents of certain military members who served in Operation Freedom’s Sentinel and Operation Inherent Resolve.

P.L.2015, c.117 established Military Dependents Scholarships for the costs of undergraduate study at a public or independent institution of higher education to the spouse, child, or other eligible dependent of a New Jersey resident who is killed, officially listed as "Missing in Action" by the United States Department of Defense, or totally and permanently disabled as certified by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs as a consequence of Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, or Operation New Dawn. As of November 2021, no scholarships have been awarded through this law. Additionally, the Military Dependents Scholarship Fund has not yet been established, as no State appropriations or private donations have been made for such fund. The Higher Education Student Assistance Authority will establish the fund when an initial appropriation or donation is received for the fund’s purpose.

This bill extends eligibility for Military Dependents Scholarships to students enrolled in a career and technical education program approved by the board of trustees of the Military Dependent Scholarship Fund. The bill updates the list of qualifying military engagements referenced in the law to include the most recent engagements, Operation Freedom’s Sentinel and Operation Inherent Resolve.

Several years have passed since the enactment of the law and no scholarships have been awarded in the intervening years. Accordingly, in the case of a spouse or other eligible dependent, the bill increases the eligibility period for a Military Dependents Scholarship from 15 years to 21 years from the date of death of the person, the date the person is officially listed as “Missing in Action,” or the date upon which the person is certified to have been totally and permanently disabled for initial receipt of the program’s benefits.

Operation Noble Eagle officially began on September 12, 2001, and is the name given to military operations to support homeland security and support federal, State, and local agencies in the wake of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.

Operation Enduring Freedom, the official name for the Global War on Terrorism, began in October 2001. This operation primarily refers to the War in Afghanistan, although additional missions are included in the operation. Operation Enduring Freedom was completed in 2014. Subsequent operations in Afghanistan by the United States military were completed under the official name

1 Operation Freedom's Sentinel. Operation Freedom's Sentinel was a
2 coalition mission to train, advise, and assist Afghan National
3 Defense and Security Forces and to conduct counterterrorism
4 operations against the remnants of al Qaeda.

5 Operation Iraqi Freedom began in 2003 with the invasion of Iraq
6 by a United States led coalition which overthrew the Iraqi
7 government of Saddam Hussein, and continued through 2011 as the
8 coalition forces fought an insurgency in Iraq. Operation Inherent
9 Resolve, begun in 2014, is the name given to United States military
10 and coalition forces united to support the Iraqi Security Force
11 operations and to complete military campaigns in Iraq, Syria, and
12 Libya.