

By: Representative Rogers (61st)

To: Military Affairs

## HOUSE BILL NO. 719

1 AN ACT TO CREATE A TUITION WAIVER PROGRAM FOR SPOUSES OF  
2 ACTIVE MEMBERS OF THE MISSISSIPPI NATIONAL GUARD; TO PROVIDE THAT  
3 WAIVERS EQUAL TO 50% OF THE COST OF TUITION MAY BE AWARDED TO  
4 ELIGIBLE SPOUSES WHO ARE STUDENTS AT THE STATE INSTITUTIONS OF  
5 HIGHER LEARNING OR PUBLIC COMMUNITY OR JUNIOR COLLEGES; TO PROVIDE  
6 THAT THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF STATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER  
7 LEARNING SHALL BE THE ADMINISTERING AGENCY FOR THE PROGRAM; TO  
8 CREATE A TUITION STABILIZATION PROGRAM FOR ACTIVE MEMBERS OF THE  
9 MISSISSIPPI NATIONAL GUARD; TO PROVIDE THAT ELIGIBLE GUARD MEMBERS  
10 MAY RECEIVE ANNUAL TUITION ASSISTANCE IN FURTHERANCE OF AN  
11 UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE AT THE STATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING;  
12 TO PROVIDE THAT THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF STATE INSTITUTIONS OF  
13 HIGHER LEARNING SHALL BE THE ADMINISTERING AGENCY FOR THE PROGRAM;  
14 AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

15 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

16 **SECTION 1.** (1) There is created a tuition waiver program  
17 for spouses of active members of the Mississippi National Guard.  
18 Under the program, an eligible spouse of an active Mississippi  
19 National Guard member may receive a waiver equal to one-half (1/2)  
20 of the cost of tuition at a state institution of higher learning  
21 or a public community or junior college in Mississippi.

22 (2) For purposes of this section, the term "spouse" is  
23 defined as a person who is a party to a marriage that is legally  
24 recognized by the State of Mississippi with a member of the  
25 Mississippi National Guard and who is defined by the Mississippi  
26 National Guard as a dependent of the guard member.

27 (3) A spouse who is a legal resident of the state and  
28 enrolled in or accepted for enrollment at a state institution of  
29 higher learning or a public community or junior college in  
30 Mississippi may apply for a tuition waiver under this program.  
31 Both full-time and part-time students may apply for tuition  
32 waivers. Students enrolling on a full-time basis may be awarded  
33 tuition waivers for a maximum of eight (8) semesters. The number

34 of waivers which may be awarded to a part-time student may not  
35 exceed the number of semester hours required to complete the  
36 associate or baccalaureate degree or certificate toward which the  
37 student is working. All tuition waivers awarded under this  
38 section must be used within a period of ten (10) consecutive  
39 years, and no spouse may be awarded a tuition waiver more than ten  
40 (10) years after being awarded the first tuition waiver. If a  
41 person awarded a tuition waiver under this section ceases to be a  
42 legal resident of this state or married to an active member of the  
43 Mississippi National Guard, the person shall no longer be eligible  
44 for tuition waivers. A spouse who has a baccalaureate degree is  
45 not eligible for a tuition waiver, and any person who has an  
46 associate degree may receive tuition waivers only in furtherance  
47 of a baccalaureate degree.

48 (4) The amount of a tuition waiver awarded under this  
49 section shall be equal to one-half (1/2) of the cost of tuition at  
50 the state institution of higher learning or public community or  
51 junior college at which the spouse is enrolled or accepted for  
52 enrollment. Tuition waivers may be applied only to tuition, and  
53 no waiver may be used for the costs of room or meals, books,  
54 materials, supplies, dues or fees assessed by the college or  
55 university.

56 (5) As a condition for renewal of a tuition waiver, a  
57 student must make steady academic progress toward a certificate or  
58 associate or baccalaureate degree, as certified by the  
59 institution's registrar, and must maintain a cumulative grade  
60 point average of at least 2.50 calculated on a 4.00 scale at the  
61 end of each term. If a student fails to achieve a 2.50 grade  
62 point average during any semester, the student will be considered  
63 on probation for tuition waiver purposes. A student on probation  
64 may be awarded a tuition waiver for the next succeeding semester  
65 that the student enrolls in the college or university; however, if  
66 a student fails to achieve a 2.50 grade point average during each

67 of two (2) consecutive semesters in which the student is enrolled,  
68 the student may not receive any additional tuition waivers under  
69 this program.

70 (6) The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher  
71 Learning and the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges  
72 jointly shall promulgate any rules and regulations necessary to  
73 carry out the purposes and intent of this section. The Board of  
74 Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning shall be the  
75 administering agency of the tuition waiver program.

76 (7) It is the intent of the Legislature to provide  
77 sufficient funds for tuition waivers for all eligible spouses  
78 under this program. If funds are insufficient to provide tuition  
79 waivers for all eligible spouses, the board shall award the  
80 waivers to first-time students on a first-come, first-served  
81 basis; however, priority consideration must be given to spouses  
82 previously receiving waivers under the program who are making  
83 steady academic progress toward completion of a certificate  
84 program or associate or baccalaureate degree.

85 **SECTION 2.** (1) There is established a tuition stabilization  
86 program for active members of the Mississippi National Guard,  
87 including Simultaneous Membership Program (SMP) cadets. Under the  
88 program, an eligible Mississippi National Guard member may receive  
89 tuition assistance at a state institution of higher learning in an  
90 amount equal to Four Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$4,500.00) or  
91 the amount authorized under the Federal Tuition Assistance  
92 Program, whichever is greater.

93 (2) An active member of the Mississippi National Guard,  
94 including an SMP cadet, who is a legal resident of the state and  
95 enrolled in or accepted for enrollment at a state institution of  
96 higher learning in Mississippi is eligible for tuition assistance  
97 under this section. Upon initial enrollment, the tuition  
98 assistance may be awarded to an eligible student for a period of  
99 four (4) continuous years. For purposes of this section, the term

100 "year" includes a spring and fall semester, each comprised of  
101 eighteen (18) or fewer academic hours, and a summer semester  
102 comprised of six (6) or fewer hours. Tuition stabilization  
103 assistance under this section is available only for undergraduate  
104 studies in furtherance of a baccalaureate degree. If a guard  
105 member awarded tuition assistance under this section ceases to be  
106 a legal resident of this state or an active member of the  
107 Mississippi National Guard, the person shall no longer be eligible  
108 for tuition waivers.

109 (3) Tuition assistance awarded under this section may be  
110 applied to tuition and any required fees directly related to  
111 enrollment at the state institution or to the guard member's  
112 course of study.

113 (4) As a condition for the continued receipt of tuition  
114 stabilization assistance, a guard member must make steady academic  
115 progress toward a baccalaureate degree, as certified by the  
116 institution's registrar, and must maintain a cumulative grade  
117 point average of at least 2.50 calculated on a 4.00 scale at the  
118 end of each term. If a student fails to achieve a 2.50 grade  
119 point average during any semester, the student will be considered  
120 on probation for tuition assistance purposes. A student on  
121 probation may be awarded tuition assistance for the next  
122 succeeding semester that the student enrolls in the state  
123 institution; however, if a student fails to achieve a 2.50 grade  
124 point average during each of two (2) consecutive semesters in  
125 which the student is enrolled, the student may not receive any  
126 additional tuition assistance under this program.

127 (5) The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher  
128 Learning shall promulgate any rules and regulations necessary to  
129 carry out the purposes and intent of this section. The Board of  
130 Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning shall be the  
131 administering agency of the Mississippi National Guard tuition  
132 stabilization program.

133           (6) It is the intent of the Legislature to provide  
134 sufficient funds for tuition assistance for all eligible guard  
135 members under this program. If funds are insufficient to provide  
136 tuition assistance for all eligible guard members, the board shall  
137 award the tuition assistance to first-time students on a  
138 first-come, first-served basis; however, priority consideration  
139 must be given to guard members previously receiving assistance  
140 under the program who are making steady academic progress toward  
141 completion of a baccalaureate degree.

142           **SECTION 3.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
143 and after July 1, 2007.