

By: Senator(s) Tate

To: Veterans and Military  
Affairs; Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2058

1 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A "DISABLED VETERAN AND DEPENDENTS  
2 PATRIOT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM" TO PROVIDE TUITION AND FEE WAIVERS  
3 FOR ELIGIBLE VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES TO ATTEND MISSISSIPPI  
4 UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES; TO PROVIDE DEFINITIONS; TO PROVIDE  
5 CRITERIA FOR CONTINUING ELIGIBILITY AND FOR THE MAXIMUM DURATION  
6 OF THE WAIVER; TO PROVIDE FOR PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION BY THE BOARD  
7 OF TRUSTEES OF STATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING AND THE  
8 ADJUTANT GENERAL; TO AMEND SECTION 37-106-41, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF  
9 1972, TO CONFORM PROVISIONS OF THE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM FOR  
10 CHILDREN OF PRISONERS OF WAR OR MIA/S IN SOUTHEAST ASIA; AND FOR  
11 RELATED PURPOSES.

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

13 **SECTION 1.** (1) As used in this section:

14 (a) "Dependent" means a child, stepchild, spouse or  
15 un-remarried widow(er).

16 (b) "Tuition" means actual cost, including any fees and  
17 books, not to exceed the highest actual cost charged by any  
18 public, accredited institution of higher learning, vocational  
19 education school or community or junior college in Mississippi.

20 (c) "Veteran" means a veteran meeting one (1) of the  
21 following service-connected disability conditions established by



the U.S Department of Veterans Affairs (formerly the Veterans Administration) or the appropriate military service department:

(i) A former prisoner of war (POW); or  
(ii) Declared missing in action (MIA); or  
(iii) Died as the result of a service-connected

disability; or

(iv) Died while on active military service in the line of duty; or

(v) Rated forty percent (40%) or more due to his/her service-connected disability(ies).

(2) There is hereby established the Mississippi "Disabled Veteran and Dependents Patriot Scholarship Program". The Adjutant General is hereby authorized to pay the tuition, room and board for any disabled veteran or his/her dependent who is enrolled or may enroll within the State of Mississippi in an accredited institution of higher learning, vocational education school or community college.

(3) The veteran must meet the following qualifications to establish eligibility of his/her dependents:

(a) An honorable discharge or other proof of honorable termination of service of the veteran or serviceman in the Armed Forces for a period of at least ninety (90) consecutive days of active duty service or service less than ninety (90) consecutive days of active duty service if the veteran or serviceman was discharged or released by reason of service-connected disability.



(b) The veteran must meet one (1) of the following service-connected disability conditions established by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (formerly the Veterans Administration) or the appropriate military service department:

(i) A former prisoner of war (POW); or  
(ii) Declared missing in action (MIA); or  
(iii) Died as the result of a service-connected disability; or

(iv) Died while on active military service in the line of duty; or

(v) Rated forty percent (40%) or more due to his/her service-connected disability(ies).

(c) Veterans with a disability rating of twenty percent (20%) to thirty percent (30%) may qualify if the effective date of their disability rating is on or before July 1, 2025. This provision will expire on July 31, 2031. Veterans whose disability rating is less than twenty percent (20%) prior to July 1, 2025, but who had a claim for compensation pending prior to that date which resulted in a final award by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs of at least twenty percent (20%) may be eligible if the dependent applies for benefits within six (6) months of that final adjudication.

(d) The veteran must have been a permanent civilian resident of the State of Mississippi for at least one (1) year immediately prior to their initial entry into active federal



military service. Initial entry into federal active military service or any subsequent entry into federal active military service where a twelve (12) month break in service occurred and one (1) of the following:

(i) Current resident for at least two (2) years immediately prior to the date of this application or date of veteran's death; or

(ii) Current resident who was discharged within the last twelve (12) months; or

(iii) Filed a resident Mississippi income tax return for the past ten (10) consecutive years.

(e) Permanently service-connected veterans rated at one hundred percent (100%) who do not meet the above residency requirements may qualify after establishing proof that they have been a bona fide resident for at least five (5) years immediately prior to the date of this application or the date of the veteran's death. This applies to one hundred percent (100%) permanent and total ratings only.

(4) As of July 1, 2025, students applying for benefits for the first time must meet all of the following:

(a) Must be a current resident of the State of Mississippi at the time of application and maintain that residency while receiving the benefit; and



(b) Must complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for each year that they are covered under the Mississippi G.I. Dependent Scholarship Program; and

(c) Must comply with Standards of Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) as defined by their education institution; and

(d) Must complete a Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) release form for each educational institution that they attend to authorize the release of personally identifiable information required to determine continued eligibility and as required for necessary reporting.

(5) Children and stepchildren of qualified veterans may receive five (5) standard academic years (ten (10) semesters) at any Mississippi state-supported institution of higher learning or a prescribed course of study at any state-supported technical college to be used for undergraduate courses of study at the in-state tuition rate.

(6) Spouses or un-remarried widow(er)s of a veteran rated at one hundred percent (100%) permanently and totally disabled may also receive five (5) standard academic years (ten (10) semesters) at any Mississippi state-supported institution of higher learning or a prescribed course of study at any state-supported technical college to be used for undergraduate courses of study at the in-state tuition rate.

(7) Spouses or un-remarried widow(er)s of a veteran rated forty percent (40%) to ninety percent (90%) disabled are entitled



120 to three (3) standard academic years (six (6) semesters) at any  
121 Mississippi state-supported institution of higher learning or a  
122 prescribed course of study at any state-supported technical  
123 college to be used for undergraduate courses of study at the  
124 in-state tuition rate.

125 (8) Beginning with applications received at the Mississippi  
126 Adjutant General's Office with a postmark dated on or after July  
127 1, 2025, tuition will be limited to the Department of Defense  
128 Tuition Assistance Cap and required textbooks and applicable fees  
129 will be limited to a combined Two Thousand Dollars (\$2,000.00)  
130 total per student for each semester. Schools may waive any  
131 overages of these charges at their discretion. All scholarships  
132 and grants must be applied to education expenses first (unless  
133 otherwise prescribed by state law) and the Mississippi G.I.  
134 Dependent Scholarship Program will be applied for any permissible  
135 remaining charge pursuant to current state law.

136 (9) There shall be no restriction on the number of eligible  
137 dependents under the veteran; however, each dependent may only  
138 receive the benefit once, regardless of changes in their future  
139 dependency status.

140 (10) The child or stepchild must initiate training under the  
141 program prior to his/her twenty-sixth (26th) birthday. A child or  
142 stepchild may be eligible for the program up to the age of thirty  
143 (30) in the discretion of the Adjutant General. If the applicant



is a stepchild, the veteran and the stepchild's parent must be legally married prior to the child's nineteenth (19th) birthday.

(11) The program shall not pay for noncredit courses, remedial courses, placement testing, GED preparation, continuing educational courses, pre-technical courses, or state board examinations or any classes beyond undergraduate courses of study.

(12) The Disabled Veteran and Dependents Patriot Scholarship Program shall only pay for those textbooks that are required for the courses in which the study is officially enrolled.

(13) Dependents are eligible to participate in the program only as long as they remain the legal dependent of the veteran from which they derive their eligibility. In the event of a divorce action, the former spouse or stepchild will be ineligible to participate effective the date of the divorce. Any educational financial obligations entered into after the divorce date will be the responsibility of the former spouse or stepchild.

(14) Widow(er) forfeits all entitlements upon remarriage without further consideration of reinstatement.

(15) Applications shall be made available at any Mississippi Department of Veterans Affairs Office.

(16) The Adjutant General of Mississippi shall be responsible for the establishment of policies, the administration and implementation of the Disabled Veteran and Dependents Patriot Scholarship Program (DVDPS). The Adjutant General of Mississippi will annually submit to the Legislature through the Legislative



Budget Office an estimated budget to support the DVDPSP, and funds shall be subject to appropriation and to audit by the State Auditor.

**SECTION 2.** Section 37-106-41, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

37-106-41. (1) If any member of the armed services, whose official house of record and residence is within the State of Mississippi, is officially reported as being either a prisoner of war or missing in action in Southeast Asia or has been a prisoner of a foreign government as the result of a military action against the United States naval vessel, Pueblo, his child or children shall be entitled to an eight-semester scholarship without cost, exclusive of books, food, school supplies, materials and dues or fees for extracurricular activities at any state-supported college or university of his choice within this state. However, no child will be entitled to receive benefits during any semester or quarter when said child has reached the age of twenty-three (23) years on the first day of the semester or quarter.

(2) The provisions of this section shall apply to the child or children of any member of the armed services who is officially reported as being either a prisoner of war or missing in action in Southeast Asia whose spouse was a resident of this state for a period of not less than ten (10) years during her minority and is a resident or physically resides within this state and does continually reside within this state at the time of enrollment and





during the enrollment, and is a resident or physically resides within this state as of April 9, 1973.

(3) It is further provided that the provisions of this section shall apply to the child or children of any person who was a resident of this state at the time he was inducted into the Armed Forces of the United States of America and who is either a former prisoner of war or officially reported as being a prisoner of war or missing in action in Southeast Asia and who, or his spouse if she was a resident of this state for a period of not less than ten (10) years during her minority, is a resident of this state and at the time of enrollment and during the enrollment of his child or children at any state-supported college or university in this state resided or resides in this state.

(4) Any applicant qualified and desiring a scholarship under this section shall apply in writing to the board. The board shall make inquiries into each such application and shall make the investigation as it deems proper to establish and validate all claims made under this section before a scholarship is granted.

(5) The provisions of this section shall be administered under rules adopted by the Adjutant General of the State of Mississippi and the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning as part of the Disabled Veteran and Dependents Patriot Scholarship Program (DVDPSP) established in Section 1 of this act.



218           **SECTION 3.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
219 and after July 1, 2025.

