

Regular Session, 2008

SENATE BILL NO. 703

BY SENATOR DORSEY

POSTSECONDARY ED. Creates the Golden Scholars Award program for persons fifty-five years of age and older and provides for implementation and administration of such program. (gov sig)

1 AN ACT

2 To enact R.S. 17:1807.1, relative to financial assistance for certain persons attending public
3 colleges and universities; to establish the Golden Scholars Award; to provide for the
4 payment of tuition and certain other costs for persons who are fifty-five years of age
5 or older; to provide for limitations; to provide for implementation; to provide for the
6 adoption of rules; to retain effectiveness of the tuition exemption program available
7 to such persons; and to provide for related matters.

8 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

9 Section 1. R.S. 17:1807.1 is hereby enacted to read as follows:

10 **§1807.1. Golden Scholars Award; persons over fifty-five years of age;**

11 **eligibility; amounts; limitations; administration**

12 **A.(1) The exemption provided for in this Section shall hereafter be**
13 **known as the "Golden Scholars Award."**

14 **(2) The state shall financially assist any person fifty-five years of age or**
15 **older who enrolls in a public college or university in this state to pursue**
16 **instruction in an academic undergraduate course of study, or skill or**
17 **occupational training as defined by the Board of Regents, including a vocational**

1 or technical education certificate or diploma program or a nonacademic
2 undergraduate degree, and who meets the following requirements:

3 (a) Is a Louisiana resident, and

4 (b) Enrolls in one or more courses of instruction, up to a maximum of
5 three credit hours each semester or the equivalent at a public college or
6 university in this state operating on a quarter system.

7 (3) Such person shall be exempt from the payment of tuition and other
8 registration fees and shall receive fifty dollars per semester or term for the cost
9 of textbooks, reference books, manuals, and other aids to instruction which are
10 required by any course in which such person is enrolled.

11 B.(1) The legislature annually shall appropriate to the administering
12 agency funds which, together with any other funds available, are sufficient to
13 cover the Golden Scholars Award and the cost of administering the program.

14 (2) All monies that are due shall be paid by the administering agency
15 directly to the college or university after receipt of a bill from the college or
16 university that indicates the person meets the qualifications and has actually
17 enrolled.

18 C. The provisions of this Section shall be administered by the Louisiana
19 Student Financial Assistance Commission. The administering agency may
20 provide by rule promulgated and adopted in accordance with the
21 Administrative Procedure Act for all matters necessary to the implementation
22 of this Section.

23 D. For the purposes of this Section:

24 (1) "Louisiana resident" shall mean a person determined by the public
25 college or university to be eligible to pay the resident tuition and mandatory
26 fees.

27 (2) "Tuition and registration fees" shall mean those fees determined by
28 the administering agency as equivalent to those payable to a public college or
29 university pursuant to the Tuition Opportunity Program for Students.

1 **E. Nothing in this Section shall limit or otherwise restrict a public college**
 2 **or university from granting an exemption from tuition and registration fees and**
 3 **a reduction in the cost of textbooks and other course aids to any person who is**
 4 **fifty-five years of age or older and who registers for one or more courses of**
 5 **instruction as authorized by and in accordance with R.S. 17:1807.**

6 Section 2. This Act shall become effective upon signature by the governor or, if not
 7 signed by the governor, upon expiration of the time for bills to become law without signature
 8 by the governor, as provided by Article III, Section 18 of the Constitution of Louisiana. If
 9 vetoed by the governor and subsequently approved by the legislature, this Act shall become
 10 effective on the day following such approval.

The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part
 of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Sherri H. Breaux.

DIGEST

Dorsey (SB 703)

Present law provides an exemption from tuition and registration fees for any La. resident who is 55 years of age or older and registers for one or more courses at a public college or university, including other registration fees. Further provides, in addition to the exemption from tuition and registration fees, for the person to receive a 50% reduction in the cost of required textbooks, reference books, manuals when purchased from a public college or university operated bookstore. Requires that any funds lost to any public college or university to be reimbursed to the college or university by the state. Provides for the tuition exemption and reduction in textbook costs be provided only if funds are appropriated by the legislature to reimburse the public college or university granting them.

Proposed law retains present law exemption, but also establishes the Golden Scholars Award. Requires the state to financially assist any Louisiana resident who is 55 years of age or older and enrolls in a public college or university to pursue instruction in an academic undergraduate course of study or, skill or occupational training, including a vocational or technical education certificate or diploma program or a nonacademic undergraduate degree, up to a maximum of three credit hours each semester or the equivalent on a quarter system. Provides the tuition and registration fees paid under the golden scholars program to be that amount as determined by the administering agency as equivalent to those payable to a public college or university pursuant to the TOPS program.

Proposed law provides for the person to receive \$50 per semester or term toward the cost of textbooks, reference books, manuals, and other aids to instruction which are required by the course.

Proposed law requires an annual appropriation, together with any other funds available, sufficient to cover the Golden Scholars Award and for program administration. Requires for all monies due to be paid by the administering agency directly to the college or university after receipt of a bill from the college or university that indicates the person meets the qualifications and has actually enrolled.

Proposed law provides for the senior scholars award to be administered by the La. Student

Financial Assistance Commission and authorizes the promulgation of rules in accordance with the APA for all matters necessary for implementation.

Proposed law defines "Louisiana resident," for purposes of qualification, as a person determined by the public college or university to be eligible to pay the resident tuition and mandatory fees.

Provides that nothing in proposed law limits or otherwise restricts any public college or university from granting the tuition exemption for persons 55 years of age or older who register for one or more courses as authorized in the present law tuition exemption program.

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

(Adds R.S. 17:1807.1)

Summary of Amendments Adopted by Senate

Committee Amendments Proposed by Senate Committee on Education to the original bill.

1. Changes the definition of "Louisiana resident" for purposes of eligibility.