Wisconsin Legislative Council
ACT MEMO

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March 25, 2024

2023 Wisconsin Act 117 [2023 Senate Bill 744]	**Tuition Grant Program for National Guard Members**

2023 Wisconsin Act 117 makes changes to the tuition grant program for members of the National Guard. This program provides grants to eligible members of the Wisconsin National Guard in an amount equal to 100 percent of the actual tuition charged by a qualifying school or 100 percent of the maximum resident undergraduate tuition charged by the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

PRIOR LAW

Prior law allowed an eligible Guard member to apply for a tuition grant upon satisfactory completion of a full- or part-time course in a qualifying school. Prior law provided that eligibility for this grant was limited to a Guard member who is not any of the following:

- An officer.

- An individual with a baccalaureate degree or its equivalent.

- Failing to meet the National Guard duty eligibility criteria established by the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) or absent without leave for more than nine unit training assemblies.

- Delinquent in child support or maintenance payments and who does not owe past support, medical expenses, or birth expenses, unless the member provides DMA with an approved payment agreement that complies with certain criteria.

- Failing to achieve a minimum grade point average of 2.0 for the semester for which a tuition grant is applied for.

- Failing to be an active drilling Guard member upon the date of the satisfactory completion of a full- or part-time course in a qualifying school.

Under prior law, the only circumstance in which DMA was directed to require a Guard member who has received a tuition grant to repay the amount of the tuition grant was if he or she was separated from the National Guard for misconduct, as defined in the rules and regulations of the National Guard, including being absent without leave for more than nine unit training assemblies.

2023 WISCONSIN ACT 117

2023 Wisconsin Act 117 allows an eligible Guard member to apply for a tuition grant prior to the completion of the semester, and requires DMA to make the payment to the qualifying school in which the member is enrolled. Under the act, an eligible Guard member must apply for a grant no earlier than 90 days prior to the start of the course and no later than 90 days after the completion of the course.

The act replaces the requirement that a Guard member may not have failed to achieve a minimum grade point average for the semester for which a tuition grant is applied for with a requirement that the Guard member must not be failing to achieve satisfactory academic progress in a qualifying school

when the tuition grant is applied for. It also specifies that a Guard member must not be failing to be an active drilling Guard member at the time he or she applies for the grant.

The act expands the circumstances under which DMA must require a Guard member who has received a tuition grant to repay the amount of the tuition grant to include the following:

- The Guard member is not a member in good standing in the National Guard at the end of the term for which the tuition grant is paid.

- The Guard member has failed to be an active drilling Guard member at the end of the term for which the tuition grant is paid.

- The Guard member has failed to achieve satisfactory academic progress at the end of the term for which the tuition grant is paid.

The act retains the requirement that DMA must require a Guard member who has received a grant to repay the grant if he or she is separated from the Guard due to misconduct. The act provides that if a Guard member is required to repay a tuition grant, DMA may require the qualifying school that received the tuition grant to recover the tuition grant and remit it to DMA.

The bill's provisions first apply to applications for tuition grants for an academic term that begins after March 16, 2024.

Effective date: March 16, 2024

For a full history of the bill, visit the Legislature's bill history page.

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