



## 104TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### State of Illinois

2025 and 2026

HB5502

Introduced 2/13/2026, by Rep. Amy Briel

#### SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

105 ILCS 5/30-14.2  
110 ILCS 947/40

Amends the Higher Education Student Assistance Act with respect to the Illinois Veteran grant program. Provides that a grant recipient is not required to pay any tuition or mandatory fees while attending a State-controlled university or public community college in this State for a period that is based on the length of his or her active duty service, as verified on his or her U.S. Department of Defense form DD-214, calculated at specified credit hour rates (rather than for a period that is equivalent to 4 years of full-time enrollment, including summer terms). Provides that a grant may be transferred to a qualified dependent beginning with the 2027-2028 academic year. Amends the School Code to make a related change. Effective July 1, 2026.

LRB104 17823 LNS 31257 b

1 AN ACT concerning education.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**  
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 5. The School Code is amended by changing Section  
5 30-14.2 as follows:

6 (105 ILCS 5/30-14.2)

7 Sec. 30-14.2. Deceased, Disabled, and MIA/POW Veterans'  
8 Dependents scholarship.

9 (a) Any spouse, natural child, legally adopted child under  
10 the age of 18 at the time of adoption, minor child younger than  
11 18 who is under a court-ordered guardianship for at least 2  
12 continuous years prior to application, or step-child under the  
13 age of 18 at the time of marriage of an eligible veteran or  
14 serviceperson who possesses all necessary entrance  
15 requirements shall, upon application and proper proof, be  
16 awarded a MIA/POW Scholarship consisting of the equivalent of  
17 4 calendar years of full-time enrollment including summer  
18 terms, to the state supported Illinois institution of higher  
19 learning of his choice, subject to the restrictions listed  
20 below.

21 "Eligible veteran or serviceperson" means any veteran or  
22 serviceperson, including an Illinois National Guard member who  
23 is on active duty or is active on a training assignment, who

1 has been declared by the U.S. Department of Defense or the U.S.  
2 Department of Veterans Affairs to be a prisoner of war or  
3 missing in action, or has died as the result of a  
4 service-connected disability or has become a person with a  
5 permanent disability from service-connected causes with 100%  
6 disability and who (i) at the time of entering service was an  
7 Illinois resident, or (ii) was an Illinois resident within 6  
8 months after entering such service, or (iii) is a resident of  
9 Illinois at the time of application for the Scholarship and,  
10 at some point after entering such service, was a resident of  
11 Illinois for at least 15 consecutive years.

12 "Full-time enrollment" means 12 or more semester hours of  
13 courses per semester, or 12 or more quarter hours of courses  
14 per quarter, or the equivalent thereof per term. Scholarships  
15 utilized by dependents enrolled in less than full-time study  
16 shall be computed in the proportion which the number of hours  
17 so carried bears to full-time enrollment.

18 Scholarships awarded under this Section may be used by a  
19 spouse or child without regard to his or her age. The holder of  
20 a Scholarship awarded under this Section shall be subject to  
21 all examinations and academic standards, including the  
22 maintenance of minimum grade levels, that are applicable  
23 generally to other enrolled students at the Illinois  
24 institution of higher learning where the Scholarship is being  
25 used. If the surviving spouse remarries or if there is a  
26 divorce between the veteran or serviceperson and his or her

1 spouse while the dependent is pursuing his or her course of  
2 study, Scholarship benefits will be terminated at the end of  
3 the term for which he or she is presently enrolled. Such  
4 dependents shall also be entitled, upon proper proof and  
5 application, to enroll in any extension course offered by a  
6 State supported Illinois institution of higher learning  
7 without payment of tuition and approved fees.

8 The holder of a MIA/POW Scholarship authorized under this  
9 Section shall not be required to pay any tuition or mandatory  
10 fees while attending a State-controlled university or public  
11 community college in this State for a period equivalent to 4  
12 years of enrollment, including summer terms.

13 Any dependent who has been or shall be awarded a MIA/POW  
14 Scholarship shall be reimbursed by the appropriate institution  
15 of higher learning for any fees which he or she has paid and  
16 for which exemption is granted under this Section if  
17 application for reimbursement is made within 2 months  
18 following the end of the school term for which the fees were  
19 paid.

20 (b) In lieu of the benefit provided in subsection (a), any  
21 spouse, natural child, legally adopted child, or step-child of  
22 an eligible veteran or serviceperson, which spouse or child  
23 has a physical, mental or developmental disability, shall be  
24 entitled to receive, upon application and proper proof, a  
25 benefit to be used for the purpose of defraying the cost of the  
26 attendance or treatment of such spouse or child at one or more

1 appropriate therapeutic, rehabilitative or educational  
2 facilities. The application and proof may be made by the  
3 parent or legal guardian of the spouse or child on his or her  
4 behalf.

5 The total benefit provided to any beneficiary under this  
6 subsection shall not exceed the cost equivalent of 4 calendar  
7 years of full-time enrollment, including summer terms, at the  
8 University of Illinois. Whenever practicable in the opinion of  
9 the Department of Veterans Affairs, payment of benefits under  
10 this subsection shall be made directly to the facility, the  
11 cost of attendance or treatment at which is being defrayed, as  
12 such costs accrue.

13 (c) The benefits of this Section shall be administered by  
14 and paid for out of funds made available to the Illinois  
15 Department of Veterans Affairs. The amounts that become due to  
16 any state supported Illinois institution of higher learning  
17 shall be payable by the Comptroller to such institution on  
18 vouchers approved by the Illinois Department of Veterans  
19 Affairs. The amounts that become due under subsection (b) of  
20 this Section shall be payable by warrant upon vouchers issued  
21 by the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs and approved by  
22 the Comptroller. The Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs  
23 shall determine, by rule, the eligibility of the persons who  
24 make application for the benefits provided for in this  
25 Section.

26 (d) A person is not eligible to receive any benefits under

1 this Section if he or she is receiving grant assistance under  
2 Section 40 of the Higher Education Student Assistance Act.

3 (Source: P.A. 104-234, eff. 8-15-25; 104-238, eff. 1-1-26;  
4 revised 11-20-25.)

5 Section 10. The Higher Education Student Assistance Act is  
6 amended by changing Section 40 as follows:

7 (110 ILCS 947/40)

8 Sec. 40. Illinois Veteran grant program.

9 (a) As used in this Section:

10 "Qualified applicant" means a person who served in the  
11 Armed Forces of the United States, a Reserve component of the  
12 Armed Forces, or the Illinois National Guard, excluding  
13 members of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps and those  
14 whose only service has been attendance at a service academy,  
15 and who meets all of the qualifications of either paragraphs  
16 (1) through (4) or paragraphs (2), (3), and (5):

17 (1) At the time of entering federal active duty  
18 service the person was one of the following:

19 (A) An Illinois resident.

20 (B) An Illinois resident within 6 months of  
21 entering such service.

22 (C) Enrolled at a State-controlled university or  
23 public community college in this State.

24 (2) The person meets one of the following

1 requirements:

2 (A) He or she served at least one year of federal  
3 active duty.

4 (B) He or she served less than one year of federal  
5 active duty and received an honorable discharge for  
6 medical reasons directly connected with such service.

7 (C) He or she served less than one year of federal  
8 active duty and was discharged prior to August 11,  
9 1967.

10 (D) He or she served less than one year of federal  
11 active duty in a foreign country during a time of  
12 hostilities in that foreign country.

13 (3) The person received an honorable discharge after  
14 leaving federal active duty service.

15 (4) The person returned to this State within 6 months  
16 after leaving federal active duty service, or, if married  
17 to a person in continued military service stationed  
18 outside this State, returned to this State within 6 months  
19 after his or her spouse left service or was stationed  
20 within this State.

21 (5) The person does not meet the requirements of  
22 paragraph (1), but (i) is a resident of Illinois at the  
23 time of application to the Commission and (ii) at some  
24 point after leaving federal active duty service, was a  
25 resident of Illinois for at least 15 consecutive years.

26 "Qualified dependent" means any spouse or natural born or

1 legally adopted child of a veteran of the United States Armed  
2 Forces who meets all of the following qualifications:

3 (1) Has earned a high school diploma or high school  
4 equivalency certificate or is at least 18 years of age  
5 and, for a natural born or legally adopted child of a  
6 veteran, less than 26 years of age, unless granted an  
7 extension by the Commission due to a qualifying illness or  
8 debilitating condition.

9 (2) Meets the cumulative grade point average  
10 requirements of the postsecondary institution.

11 (3) Is a resident of Illinois for the term in which the  
12 grant under subsection (i) is transferred.

13 "Time of hostilities" means any action by the Armed Forces  
14 of the United States that is recognized by the issuance of a  
15 Presidential proclamation or a Presidential executive order  
16 and in which the Armed Forces expeditionary medal or other  
17 campaign service medals are awarded according to Presidential  
18 executive order.

19 (b) A person who otherwise qualifies under the definition  
20 of "qualified applicant" under subsection (a) of this Section  
21 but has not left federal active duty service and has served at  
22 least one year of federal active duty or has served for less  
23 than one year of federal active duty in a foreign country  
24 during a time of hostilities in that foreign country and who  
25 can provide documentation demonstrating an honorable service  
26 record is eligible to receive assistance under this Section.

1 (c) A grant recipient ~~qualified applicant~~ is not required  
2 to pay any tuition or mandatory fees while attending a  
3 State-controlled university or public community college in  
4 this State for a period that is based on the length of the  
5 qualified applicant's federal active duty service, as verified  
6 on his or her U.S. Department of Defense form DD-214,  
7 calculated as follows: ~~equivalent to 4 years of full-time~~  
8 ~~enrollment, including summer terms.~~

9 (1) 72 credit hours (or 60% of the maximum payable  
10 benefit) for 12 or more months but less than 18 months of  
11 active duty service;

12 (2) 84 credit hours (or 70% of the maximum payable  
13 benefit) for 18 or more months but less than 24 months of  
14 active duty service;

15 (3) 96 credit hours (or 80% of the maximum payable  
16 benefit) for 24 or more months but less than 30 months of  
17 service;

18 (4) 108 credit hours (or 90% of the maximum payable  
19 benefit) for 30 or more months but less than 36 months of  
20 service; or

21 (5) 120 credit hours (or 100% of the maximum payable  
22 benefit) for 36 or more months of service.

23 A qualified applicant who has previously received benefits  
24 under this Section for a non-mandatory fee shall continue to  
25 receive benefits covering such fees while he or she is  
26 enrolled in a continuous program of study. The qualified

1 applicant shall no longer receive a grant covering  
2 non-mandatory fees if he or she fails to enroll during an  
3 academic term, unless he or she is serving federal active duty  
4 service.

5 (d) A person ~~qualified applicant~~ who has been or is to be  
6 awarded assistance under this Section shall receive that  
7 assistance if the person ~~qualified applicant~~ notifies his or  
8 her postsecondary institution of that fact by the end of the  
9 school term for which assistance is requested.

10 (e) Assistance under this Section is considered an  
11 entitlement that the State-controlled college or public  
12 community college in which the person ~~qualified applicant~~ is  
13 enrolled shall honor without any condition other than the  
14 person's ~~qualified applicant's~~ maintenance of minimum grade  
15 levels and a satisfactory student loan repayment record  
16 pursuant to subsection (c) of Section 20 of this Act.

17 (f) The Commission shall administer the grant program  
18 established by this Section and shall make all necessary and  
19 proper rules not inconsistent with this Section for its  
20 effective implementation.

21 (g) All applications for assistance under this Section  
22 must be made to the Commission on forms that the Commission  
23 shall provide. The Commission shall determine the form of  
24 application and the information required to be set forth in  
25 the application, and the Commission shall require ~~qualified~~  
26 applicants to submit with their applications any supporting

1 documents that the Commission deems necessary. Upon request,  
2 the Department of Veterans Affairs shall assist the Commission  
3 in determining the eligibility of applicants for assistance  
4 under this Section.

5 (h) Assistance under this Section is available as long as  
6 the federal government provides educational benefits to  
7 veterans. Assistance must not be paid under this Section after  
8 6 months following the termination of educational benefits to  
9 veterans by the federal government, except for persons who  
10 already have begun their education with assistance under this  
11 Section. If the federal government terminates educational  
12 benefits to veterans and at a later time resumes those  
13 benefits, assistance under this Section shall resume.

14 (i) Beginning with the 2027-2028 academic year, a grant  
15 awarded under this Section may be transferred to a qualified  
16 dependent if the qualified dependent's spouse or parent meets  
17 all of the following qualifications:

18 (1) He or she is a qualified applicant under  
19 subsection (a) or (b).

20 (2) He or she has served at least 6 years of federal  
21 active duty service and at least 2 years of Reserve or  
22 Individual Ready Reserve service.

23 (3) He or she has no federal veterans' educational  
24 benefits or no federal veterans' educational benefits  
25 dedicated only to the payment of tuition and fees, such as  
26 Chapter 31 or 33 benefits, for an enrolled term or

1 semester that exceed the value of a grant under this  
2 Section.

3 (4) He or she is a resident of Illinois during the term  
4 of the qualified dependent's enrollment unless the veteran  
5 has been recalled to active duty outside the State or has  
6 rejoined the military and is outside the State pursuant to  
7 military orders. However, a veteran who has a  
8 service-connected disability rating, as determined by the  
9 U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, of 90% to 100% or is  
10 unemployable based on a total disability, as determined by  
11 the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, is not required  
12 to maintain Illinois residency while his or her qualified  
13 dependent receives benefits under this subsection.

14 A qualified dependent of a person who was killed in the  
15 line of duty, was a prisoner of war, was missing in action, had  
16 a service-connected disability rating, as determined by the  
17 U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, of 90% to 100%, was  
18 unemployable based on a total disability, as determined by the  
19 U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, or died as a result of  
20 injury or illness directly related to his or her military  
21 service is eligible for a grant transfer of no less than 120  
22 credit hours under this subsection if the spouse or parent  
23 would have otherwise met the qualifications under this  
24 subsection. A dependent who is a natural born or legally  
25 adopted child of a veteran may still qualify for a grant under  
26 this subsection if he or she marries or if his or her parents

1 divorce.

2 Benefits under this Section may not be used simultaneously  
3 by both the veteran and his or her qualified dependent. A  
4 veteran may revoke or otherwise change the transfer of his or  
5 her benefits to a qualified dependent under this subsection at  
6 any time but may not transfer his or her benefits to the same  
7 qualified dependent again once those benefits have been  
8 revoked for that qualified dependent. Benefits under this  
9 Section may not be transferred to a qualified dependent if he  
10 or she is receiving grant assistance under Section 30-14.2 of  
11 the School Code.

12 A veteran may transfer benefits under this subsection to  
13 multiple qualified dependents; however, the total number of  
14 credit hours of assistance transferred may not exceed 120  
15 credit hours, and a veteran may transfer benefits to only one  
16 qualified dependent at a time.

17 (Source: P.A. 104-234, eff. 8-15-25.)

18 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect July 1,  
19 2026.